Mecca in Morocco

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Articulations of the Muslim pilgrimage (Hajj) in Moroccan everyday life

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by

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Note on Transliteration

As all conversations, narratives, stories, etc., in the thesis have been in Arabic; I have taken the responsibility of translating them to English. Arabic words and phrases have been rendered in the simplest manner yet recognizable to the Arabic speaker with being faithful, as much as possible, to the Moroccan dialect, *dārīja*, in which these words were spoken. Although Moroccan Arabic dialect diverges from Modern Standard Arabic in several ways, I have chosen to adopt a simplified version of the transliteration used by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)* as shown in the table below. In some cases, the current Moroccan transcription, which is based on French transliteration, is added. Moroccan proper names and names of places retain their usual transcription that is used in Morocco, which follows French conventions. Terms that have entered the English language or toponyms are transcribed in their most common English form as reflected in Merriam Webster dictionary or as they appeared in the IJMES Word List such as Qur'an, hadith, and Muhammad (the Prophet) and appear un-italicized. Following common practice in English writings on the subject, (the) Hajj is capitalized, but un-transliterated, throughout.[1] In an attempt to reflect the Arabic usage, Hajj generally is written with the English definite article (the). Occasionally, much as with the Arabic Allāh, which is literally 'the God', but commonly rendered into English as God, Hajj is written without the definite article. If an Arabic term does not appear in the dictionary, then it is transliterated and written in italics for example in reference to male and female pilgrims, I used *al-ḥājj/ al-ḥājja*. Last but not least, when translations of Qur'anic verses are used, the interpretation of M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (2004) is adopted. This translation of the Qur'an is written in contemporary language, making the text understandable while providing an accurate rendering of the original Arabic.

Transliteration table:

ء = ʾ	د = d	ض = ḍ	ك = k
ب = b	ذ = dh	ط = ṭ	ل = l
ت = t	ر = r	ظ = ẓ	م = m
ث = th	ز = z	ع = ʿ	ن = n
ج = j	س = s	غ = gh	ه = h
ح = ḥ	ش = sh	ف = f	و = w
خ = kh	ص = ṣ	ق = q	ي = y

Vowels:	Long	ا/ى = ā	و = ū	ي = ī
	Short	َ = a	ُ= u	ِ = i
	Diphtong		وَ = aw	يَ = ay

[1] See Peters (1994).

PROLOGUE

Memories of the Pilgrimage to Mecca[2]

I grew up in a Palestinian Muslim family in a refugee camp located between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, two cities sacred to people of the three Abrahamic religions. Holy places in Palestine were very significant for my parents, especially the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, the first *qibla*, or direction of prayer, for Muslims before Mecca and the third of the holiest mosques for Muslims after the Grand Mosque of Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.[3] Similarly, the Kaʿba in Mecca, the place towards which Muslims turn during the five daily prayers was most significant to my parents.[4] Making the pilgrimage to Mecca was a dream for my parents which they were able to realize in 1996. I was only a young girl at the time, so that all I remember of those days are a few details. I recall that my parents prepared for a journey to Jordan, from where they would travel by land with a group of pilgrims to Mecca. They talked about visiting the Kaʿba and also about the Prophet. My siblings, uncles, and neighbors all came to our house before the day of departure to bid my parents farewell. I recall several guests asking my parents to pass their greetings to the Prophet and to pray for them at the holy sites.

While my parents were away, we did not have much contact with them. I cannot remember if they called our landline, which was the main means of communication in our household. Internet, mobile phones, and similar modern communication means were not available – for us – at the

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[2] Mecca is the holiest city for Muslims in which the Muslim pilgrimage, Hajj, takes place. Some Muslims write the city's name as 'Makka' or 'Makkah'. For the purpose of this thesis, the spelling 'Mecca' will be used throughout (cf. Esin 1963).

[3] The term *qibla* refers to the direction of the Kaʿab in Mecca toward which Muslims turn in ritual prayer. At the beginning of Islam, for about 13 years, Muslims prayed towards the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem (from 610 CE until 623 CE) until the direction of prayer was changed to the Kaʿba (cf. Shoemaker 2012).

[4] The Kaʿba is an almost cubic stone building measuring 12 square meters and is 15 meters high; it is often covered with a black cover known as *kiswa* (Schimmel 1994, 57).

time. My parents had been away for about a month when we heard news that they were finally back in Jordan. There, they remained for a few days with family whilst we excitedly prepared for their return. It was a momentous family event: my sisters prepared food and sweets, made sure to clean every corner of the house, prepared the guest room where visitors would be welcomed, and washed the street in front of the house. Being the youngest child, I did not have much responsibility in those preparations until the day of my parents' return when I was instructed by one of my brothers to go to a neighboring house and bring foliage from a palm tree. My brother was busy hanging a large board outside the house, above the front door. The board was a welcoming message to my parents, referring to them as 'the pilgrims of the House of God'. It was the most elaborate sign I had ever seen in the camp, stating the message *Hajj mabrūr, dhanb maghfūr, wa saʿī mashkūr* (May God accept your hajj, grant you forgiveness, and reward you for your efforts).

I brought the foliage of a palm tree as instructed. Palm leaves have a long tradition in Palestine among both Muslims and Christians.[5] In local tradition, it is believed that palm branches are a sign of welcome.[6] For Muslims, a story is narrated about the Prophet Muhammad's migration, *hijra*, from Mecca to Medina when residents of Medina, who waited for the arrival of the Prophet, waved palm branches and sang the traditional *nashīd* of *talaʿa al-badru ʿalayna* (the full moon rose over us).[7]

The full moon rose over us	*talaʿa al-badr ʿalaynā*
from the valley of *wadā* [8]	*min thaniyyat al-wadāʿ*

[5] The palm is also a symbol often associated with Paradise (Rustomji 2009, 43-67).

[6] Interestingly, Palm Sunday in Christianity is the day Christ was said to have entered Jerusalem. Palms were strewn in his path. In Catholicism, on Palm Sunday, a person is given a palm leaf which he or she makes into a cross and keeps until the next year (cf. Harris 2019).

[7] *Hijra* refers to the prophet Muhammad's migration (622 CE) from Mecca to Medina in order to escape persecution. It also gives its name to the Muslim lunar calendar; 622 CE is year 1 of the Islamic - called hijri calendar (cf. Eickelman 1990; Shaikh 2001).

[8] The valley of *wadāʿ* is a narrow road between two mountains which travelers from Mecca had to pass to reach Medina (cf. Watt 2012).

And we owe it to show gratefulness	*wajaba al-shukr ʿalaynā*
when the call is to God	*mā daʿā lillāhi dāʿ*
Oh, you who were raised among us	*ayyuhā al-mabʿūthu fīnā*
coming with the words to be obeyed	*jiʾta bil-ʾamr l-muṭāʿ*
Coming to the city, *Medina*, of nobleness	*jiʾta sharrafta l-madīna*
welcome good scholar to God's way	*marḥaban yā khayra dāʿ*

Upon the safe arrival of my parents, dozens of people gathered in our house to welcome them; all cheered when the taxi arrived and the welcoming people greeted them with *Hajj mabrūr*, a supplication prayer for an accomplished Hajj. My parents took turns in telling stories of their journey: the people they met from many countries, the friends they made, and the differences in languages, food traditions, and behavior. The stories were interesting, but I could not wait until the bags that my parents brought back would be opened. They had left with one bag and returned with many and I was full of curiosity. First, however, the guests had to be offered sweet dates from Medina and Zamzam water from Mecca.[9]

In the evening the bags were finally opened, showing gifts and souvenirs of many colors: beads, bracelets, prayer mats, headscarves, dresses, silk fabric, bed covers, and much more. My share was a couple of golden bracelets and green and blue clothing, in a style my mother referred to as 'Pakistani' which included traditional, embroidered trousers with a long shirt. I ran into my room to try my gift on, the blue shirt and trousers fit well while the green ones were smaller and tight. I was determined to wear them, nonetheless.

The gifts that my parents brought provided my first insight as a child into the diversity of the pilgrimage experience: dresses from Pakistan and Syria, cotton t-shirts from Egypt, bed covers from Jordan, as well as Indian spices, henna, and silk scarves. The wide-ranging stories

[9] Zamzam water comes from the Well of Zamzam which is located within the Grand Mosque of Mecca. According to Islamic tradition, the well of Zamzam was discovered by Hagar, the second wife of Abraham when she searched for water for her thirsty baby, Ishmael. Many benefits are associated to the Zamzam water including its ability to satisfy both thirst and hunger as well as other health benefits. During the Hajj pilgrims drink Zamzam water and carry it to share with others when they return home (cf. Sardar 2014).

and the fondness with which my parents continued to speak about the Hajj, Mecca and Medina was a signifier of the importance they attached to the pilgrimage experience. My parents' pilgrimage was an act of devotion and an occasion to experience being together with Muslims from all around the world: the *umma*.[10]

Listening to my parents' stories about their pilgrimage to Mecca was inspiring. My mother's stories of Mecca were always positive, constructing an image of a place where people of different cultures and backgrounds met, where she felt secure and close to God, and where she made friends who came from different countries. Mecca was a touchstone of reference: a place my mother referred to when she spoke of good days. This familiarity stimulated my curiosity concerning the meaning of Hajj, both in the lives of my parents and millions of other Muslims who perform the pilgrimage to Mecca.

On reflection, I now see that it was my deep respect for my parents which made their Hajj narratives important to me. Who would have thought at the time that twenty years later, my parents would return to Mecca, this time to accompany me during my first visit as part of my PhD studies? On this occasion, I travelled as an observer, as a participant and as the ethnographer writing the first single-country ethnographic study of the Hajj. That country is Morocco.

[10] *Umma* means people or community. The word occurs some 62 times in the Qur'an in the sense of religious community or a generation of people sharing a common belief (cf. Denny 2012).

“Proclaim the Pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you on foot and on every kind of swift mount, emerging from every deep mountain pass; to attain benefits and celebrate God’s name, on specified days, over the livestock He has provided for them– feed yourselves and the poor and unfortunate” (Qur’an 22, 27-28).

Introduction

Fatima, a Moroccan woman in her sixties and a mother of seven, took me to visit Fes el Bali, the old city of Fes, one day after my arrival in the city. Our tour started at Bab Boujloud, a blue gate that gives access to the start of *ṭalʿa kibīra*, the main souk street that crosses the *medina* (old city) and leads to the Qarawiyyin mosque at its heart. As we walked down in the *medina*, we passed street vendors and restaurants offering traditional cuisine; we encountered both locals and tourists in a mixture of traditional and modern clothes. The *medina* was vibrant with life, sounds, smells and colors. The scent of fresh herbs mixed with the odor of freshly dyed animal skins from the tanneries, accompanied by a rich soundtrack of artisans at work, with laughter and conversations between people on the street.

Fatima walked so confidently through the alleys of the *medina* that appeared to me to be a maze of workshops. She talked about the *medina* of Fes as her birthplace, where – for generations – artisans and craftsmen continued to pass on carefully studied techniques from father to son. She referred to herself as a proud female resident of Fes, a *fāsiyya*. On our way, we stopped at several shops: at one to buy almond sweets, at another to get a mixture of green and black olives, and at a third where Fatima purchased spices. The shops were excitingly buzzing with life; Fatima seemed happily familiar with everyone and everything.

As she entered each of the shops, Fatima would start a conversation with: "*al-salāmu ʿalaykum*", to which the reply was: "*wa-ʿalaykum al-salām,*" followed with: "Welcome, *al-ḥājja!*"[11] In the market, in the neighborhood, and even among relatives, friends and family members, Fatima is known as *al-ḥājja*, an honorific title which is given to a Muslim person who has successfully completed the Hajj, the (major) pilgrimage

[11] *Al-salāmu ʿalaykum* is a greeting in Arabic that means 'peace be upon you'. The typical response to the greeting is *wa-ʿalaykum al-salām* meaning 'and peace be upon you, too'. The complete greeting in Islam is *al-salāmu ʿalaykum wa-raḥmatu Allāhi wa-barakātuhū* meaning 'Peace be upon you, as well as the mercy of God and His blessings' (Arendonk and Gimaret 2012).

to Mecca. Fatima had performed the Hajj some twenty years earlier, yet, through this title, the legacy of having completed the religious duty has accompanied her ever since, and was also reflected in her position in society, as I saw it. In turn, she herself often referred to her pilgrimage to Mecca, underscoring the personal and societal significance of the journey.

I lived in Fatima's house in Fes for several weeks when I started my fieldwork in Morocco, a home that became both a refuge during fieldwork and a substitute family. Fatima would talk to me and, at other times, to friends and family members in my presence, for hours about her memories from Mecca and her wish to visit it again. Witnessing her conversations, I saw how the pilgrimage had become part of her everyday life. Another sign of the significance of Hajj for her, was to be seen in the decoration and ornamentation of Fatima's house in Fes. Her main living room had a framed photograph of the Grand Mosque of Mecca. On the wall, two portraits dominated the view: one of Fatima's parents and the other of her in-laws. Both the two men and two women in the portraits were dressed in *iḥrām* clothing, garments worn by Muslims during the pilgrimage to Mecca.[12] Fatima told me stories of her parents' pilgrimage and the tradition of taking a portrait photograph, and sometimes a painting, in the *iḥrām* clothing, often in a studio in Mecca or in Morocco before leaving for the Hajj.[13]

I accompanied Fatima in several family gatherings and celebrations where people showed her much respect. Fatima often spoke about how the pilgrimage to Mecca helped her develop as a Muslim. When we visited relatives coming from Mecca or when she heard of friends going on Hajj, she would react with: "*saʿdāthum* [lucky them]."[14] In conversations about Mecca, Fatima or her many friends would say:

[12] *Iḥrām* clothing includes men's and women's garments worn by Muslim people while performing the rites of pilgrimage, during either of the major pilgrimage (Hajj) or the minor pilgrimage (*ʿumra*) (cf. Peters 2007).
[13] See Figure 58 (page 415).
[14] *Saʿdāthum* (sing. *saʿdātik*) is an expression often used by Moroccans to mean 'good for you' or 'how lucky you are'. It conveys happiness and sometimes envy.

"*Allah lā yiḥrimna min dhāk al-maqām* [May God never prevent anyone from those holy places]."[15]

While Fatima and I were walking out of the *medina* that very first day of my fieldwork, we passed by two young men standing near a pottery shop. I overheard the older man say: "When will you find a wife?" to which the second replied: "I want to get married to a good woman, and I will send her mother to Mecca for Hajj so she will know how much I value her!" A casually overheard comment, but a significant one.

From the very inception of my research in Morocco, the religious and social significance of the Hajj was underscored by seemingly small details, encapsulated in daily conversation, such as those recounted above. Through these small but telling details, I came to appreciate the way in which Hajj permeates every level of a person's life after their pilgrimage, its long-lasting legacy for the individual, but also the myriad ways the Hajj infuses people's interactions, social structures, community values, and everyday life in Morocco, the topic of my study.[16]

This ethnographic study examines the socio-cultural embeddedness of the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, in present day Moroccan society. It approaches the Hajj as both a sacred religious rite and a human and logistical feat that plays a vital role for Muslims in crafting their religious selves. This study is a subproject of a larger research study that aims to produce insights into the dynamics of Islam as a living tradition by studying various modalities of modern articulations of Meccan pilgrimage.[17] The specific objective of this particular subproject is to

[15] *Allah lā yiḥrimna min dhāk al-maqām* meand 'May God never prevent anyone from going to that holy place'. It is a common shared expression among pilgrims. For further discussion on religious formulas in everyday Arabic language see, among others, Migdadi, Badarneh, and Momani (2010); Farghal (1995); Gregory and Wehbe (1986).

[16] Fieldnotes, 02/08/2015. All grey marked vignettes in the manuscript are based on my fieldnotes.

[17] The project *'More magical than Disneyland': Modern articulations of pilgrimage to Mecca* was funded by NWO, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (grant number: 360-25-150; programme leader: Prof. dr. M.W. Buitelaar, University of Groningen).

produce knowledge and insights into how Meccan pilgrimage features in the everyday lives of Moroccans. More specifically, it studies how religious practices and social identifications are related to conceptions of the sacred and profane in people's everyday lives. Therefore, approaching pilgrimage from the perspective of its role in a lived religion, I examine the overarching questions: *How does the Hajj pilgrimage feature in the everyday lives of Moroccans and how are Moroccan views of Hajj reflected in the micro-practices of pilgrims and their wider networks?*

To answer the two related questions, I address the following three sub-questions:

1. How is the desire to go on Hajj, the experience of Hajj performance, and the act of becoming a pilgrim (*ḥājj or ḥājja*) related to the process of self-fashioning in everyday life?
2. How is the Meccan pilgrimage, and the meanings attributed to it by Moroccans, informed by various forms of identity politics and different webs of power relations that various categories of pilgrims and non-pilgrims are embedded in?
3. How is the Meccan pilgrimage integrated into social practices and cultural products of everyday life in Morocco?

Since the aim of this thesis is to examine the significance of the Hajj in the everyday lives of Muslims in Morocco and the subsequent impact on how people negotiate social relations and micro-practices, the analysis of empirical data produced in the research is organized in three parts, each corresponding to one of the sub-questions. Consequently, these three parts contribute to answering the overarching question from different, albeit interrelated, perspectives. Following Chapter One, in which I outline the theoretical debates and methodological insights guiding this thesis, the first empirical part focuses on the everyday lives of pilgrims, before, during and after the pilgrimage. I begin by exploring the experiences of pilgrims before they embark on the journey to Mecca, scrutinizing the bureaucracy involved in the application, as well as considering both the religious and logistical preparations necessary for the performance of the Hajj. I then discuss the narratives of pilgrims

concerning their actual experience of the Hajj, viewed through the lens of the Hajj as a 'sensational form', and reflect on the Hajj as an emotional experience. In the chapter that follows, I look at the everyday lives of pilgrims once they return from Mecca, and considerations of how their everyday experiences and self-fashioning are inextricably intertwined with their new honorific title, *al-ḥājj* (for male pilgrims) *al-ḥājja* (for female pilgrims).

The second part of the thesis opens with a chapter discussing the significance of the Hajj for Moroccans, both within the wider political domain of the Moroccan government, and within the individual sphere, exploring how Moroccans express their sense of national belonging. The subsequent chapter examines another political dimension by zooming in on how Saudi politics affects the organization of the Hajj. I sketch in it how Moroccans, as pilgrims who experience the new regulations and politically influenced changes in Mecca, reflect on the power exercised over them. The third chapter of the second part looks specifically at women, whose Hajj experiences in some respects differ from those of their male counterparts because of their gender.

For the third and final part of this thesis, I shift the focus from pilgrims to wider situations in Moroccan society where references to the pilgrimage or to Mecca are made in the context of everyday social and cultural practices. The first practice is a local pilgrimage known in Morocco as the 'Pilgrimage of the Poor', a local pilgrimage rooted in religious observation. I then look at songs and stories related to the Hajj that feature both on special occasions and in everyday situations.

As the analysis of my own observations and of the stories of my interlocutors' Hajj experiences unfolds in the three empirical parts of the thesis, I explore the diversity of expression of the Islamic tradition by focusing on its articulation and enactment within Morocco, thus illustrating how the Islamic tradition is adapted to and informed by local historical and cultural inheritances. I demonstrate that, far from being a monolithic, unequivocal set of practices, Islam can be held to be a nuanced and varied religious tradition, attempting to satisfy the needs and character of its practitioners whilst respecting and upholding certain

core tenets, such as, for the purposes of this thesis, the centrality of the Hajj.

The rites of Hajj

The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and a duty which Muslims must perform – once in a lifetime – if they are physically and financially able.[18] The Hajj takes place during a five-day period from the eighth to the thirteenth of Dhū l-Ḥijja, the last month of the Islamic lunar calendar at the city of Mecca (and its surroundings) in Saudi Arabia. During the days of Hajj, pilgrims perform a series of symbolic, religious and emotional rites, following the footsteps of the prophets Abraham and Muhammad (cf. Bowen 2012).[19]

The first of the Hajj rites is entering *iḥrām* or state of consecration which takes place when pilgrims approach the surroundings of Mecca at the *mīqāt*, one of five official locations that mark the boundaries of the sacred area around Mecca.[20] Here, pilgrims perform a ritual ablution.

[18] The other four pillars of Islam are: reciting the testimony of faith, the *shahāda,* of 'There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God', performing ritual prayers five times a day, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the giving of alms. The word 'Hajj' probably derives from an old Semitic root meaning 'to go' or 'to visit a holy place' (Mawdudi 1982; Daluw 1969, 273).

[19] The significance and meanings attributed to the Hajj and its rites has differed among scholars of Islam. Many scholars build on al-Ghazali's emphasis on 'pure obedience', but in different ways extrapolate to ritual efficacy and mythic re-enactment (Al-Ghazali 2009). Since the purpose of this thesis is not a discussion on Islamic scholarly interpretations of the Hajj, the discussion is restricted to convey more general interpretations for which there might be a broad, albeit not a complete consensus among contemporary Muslims (cf. Katz 2004).

[20] *Mīqāt* refers to any one of five stations in a radius bordering the sacred territory of Mecca where pilgrims purify themselves and put on the *iḥrām* before going on Hajj or *ʿumra* (cf. Wensinck and Jomier 2012). Those coming from the direction of Medina and its surrounding areas have their point of *iḥrām* in a place called Dhū al-Ḥulifa, while those coming from the direction of Syria, and all areas north of it use al-Juḥfah. Pilgrims coming from the direction of Najd have their *mīqāt* in Qarn al-Manazil, and those coming from the direction of Yemen use the *mīqāt* of Yalamlam. Those living near Mecca should put on their *iḥrām* where they live, while the inhabitants of Mecca itself should put on *iḥrām* as soon as they declare their intention to perform the Hajj (cf. Peters 1994). When flying to Mecca, it is necessary to wear one's ihram before one's plane enters the *mīqāt's*

Then, men dress in two seamless white sheets that are wrapped around the waist and the left shoulder and women are free to dress in any manner they find proper, as long as they cover their whole body apart from their hands and faces.[21] Males must keep their heads uncovered and females must keep their face unveiled (Al-Bukhārī, book 28, hadith 18). The uniformity and simplicity of the *iḥrām* symbolizes the humility and equality of all believers before God, regardless of worldly differences in race, nationality, class, age, gender or culture (Bianchi 2013, 25). Entering *iḥrām* also symbolizes detachment from everyday material life and entrance into the sacred time and space of the pilgrimage (Haq and Jackson 2009; Cooke and Lawrence 2005).

Following the entering of *iḥrām* at the *mīqāt* locations, the pilgrims announce their *niyya* (intention) to perform the Hajj, the *ʿumra* which is a lesser optional pilgrimage, or both, and often perform two *rakʿa* of *salāt* (ritual prayers). [22] Upon completing their *iḥrām,* pilgrims proceed to Mecca whilst reciting the *talbiya*:

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zone in the air; for Moroccans that is Rabigh, which is roughly on the same plane as al-Juḥfah.

[21] Women are not allowed to cover their faces during Hajj, based on hadith narrated in al-Bukhārī that when prophet Muhammad was asked what clothes pilgrims may wear in the state of *iḥrām* he said: "…Do not wear a shirt or trousers, or any headgear [e.g. a turban], or a hooded cloak; but if somebody has no shoes he can wear leather stockings provided they are cut short off the ankles, and also, do not wear anything perfumed with saffron, and the *muḥrima* [a woman in the state of *iḥrām*] should not cover her face, or wear gloves" (Al-Bukhārī, book 28, hadith 18).

[22] *Ṣalāt (or ṣalāh)* refers to ritual prayers performed by Muslims. The *ṣalāt* consists of multiple movements which include standing, bowing, prostrating, sitting and reciting Qurʾanic verses and other specific words. Each time a person preforms these steps is called *rakʿa* and each prayer consists of 2 or more *rakʿa*s. There are five mandatory prayers per day that a Muslim should perform: *fajr* (takes place at the time of dawn before sunrise), *ẓuhur* (at midday, after the sun passes its highest), *ʿaṣr* (late part of the afternoon), *maghrib* (just after sunset), and *ʿishāʾ* (between sunset and dawn). Muslims can also make voluntary prayers at other times of the day or at specific occasion such as entering the state of *iḥrām*, following the *ṭawāf* around the Kaʿba, or for the death among others (cf. Katz 2013). Throughout the thesis, I refer to ritual prayers as *ṣalāt* prayers to distinguish them from supplication prayers which I refer to them as *duʿāʾ* prayers following the Arabic name.

Here I am at Your service, O Lord,	*Labbayka Allāhumma*
Here I am;	*labbayk;*
Here I am; You have no partners,	*Labbayka lā sharīka laka;*
Yours alone is all praise;	*Inna al-ḥamda,*
and all bounty;	*Wa al-niʿmata;*
Yours alone is the sovereignty;	*Laka wa-l-mulk;*
Youth have no partners.	*Lā sharīka lak.*

In addition to *talbiya*, pilgrims can also perform unprescribed *duʿāʾ*, supplication prayers.

From the moment pilgrims have completed their *iḥrām*, they should refrain from lewdness, abuse, or hostile argument (Peters 1994). Indeed, Muslims should not commit any of these offences at any time, but they are even more sinful during Hajj. Pilgrims must also refrain from any form of sexual activity and from contracting marriage, and they must not use perfume, no animal may be hunted or killed, and they must not cut their hair or clip their nails until the pilgrimage rites are over when pilgrims can remove their *iḥrām* (Abdel Haleem 2012, 1). When pilgrims reach the Kaʿba, the cubic building in the center of the courtyard of the Grand Mosque of Mecca, they raise their hands, ask God for His grace and then start performing the first *ṭawāf,* known as *ṭawāf al-qudūm,* a sevenfold anticlockwise circumambulation around the Kaʿba.[23] The *ṭawāf* starts from the black stone which pilgrims should touch, if possible, otherwise they should point towards it every time they pass it.[24] As the Kaʿba is often called an earthly counterpart of God's throne in Heaven or *Bayt Allāh al-Ḥarām* (House of God), the *ṭawāf* is seen by most Muslims as a human imitation of angels' circulation of the throne in worship (Bianchi 2013, 25).

[23] During *ṭawāf*, male pilgrims should also leave their right shoulder bare to demonstrate their humility (cf. Buhl 2012).

[24] The black stone is a rock set into the eastern corner of the Kaʿba. According to hadith: "the black stone is from Paradise" (Al-Nisāʾī, vol. 3, book 24, hadith 2938).

Figure 1: Pilgrims performing *ṭawāf* around the Kaʿba
(Mecca, 04/02/2018)

After *ṭawāf*, pilgrims proceed to the Place of Abraham or *maqām Ibrāhīm*, a glass-covered stone that is said to have the footprints of the prophet, where pilgrims perform two *rakʿa* of *ṣalāt* prayers. They are then recommended to drink from the water of Zamzam and proceed to perform the next rite of *saʿī* which includes walking and running between two hillocks, Ṣafā and Marwā (Matthews and Matthews 1996).[25] The *saʿī* between the two hillocks commemorates the search for water by Abraham's second wife Hagar for her baby son Ishmael (cf. Tagliacozzo and Toorawa 2015, 32-24). When Abraham, on God's command, left the mother and infant alone in the desert, Hagar anxiously searched for water for her thirsty son and discovered the sacred water of Zamzam, the water from which pilgrims continue to drink during the pilgrimage and carry

[25] The Well of Zamzam is located within the Grand Mosque of Mecca and is believed to be a miraculously granted source of water from God to Hagar, wife of Abraham and mother of Ishmael (cf. Chabbi 2012).

home to share with their dear ones upon return (Tagliacozzo and Toorawa 2015, 34; Katz 2004; Peters 1994). By running or walking seven times between the hillocks of Ṣafā and Marwā, pilgrims commemorate Hagar's ordeal and her trust in God to save her baby and herself (Peters 1994).[26] When performed outside the season of Hajj, the rites of *ṭawāf* and *saʿī* are considered as *ʿumra*, the Muslim voluntary pilgrimage which can be undertaken at any time of the year.[27]

Figure 2: Pilgrims performing *saʿī* (left) and a Zamzam water tap (right) (Mecca, 04/02/2018)

[26] There are three different types of Hajj, namely: *Hajj-ul-ifirād* (when a pilgrim does not combine Hajj with *ʿumra*), *Hajj-ul-qirān* (combines Hajj and *ʿumra*), and *Hajj-ul-tamattuʿ* (performs *ʿumra* first then Hajj) (Al-Baṣīrī 2002).

[27] For both Hajj and *ʿumra*, a Muslim must first assume *iḥrām* and both rituals end with *ḥalq* or *taqṣīr* (shaving or partial shortening of the hair). A pilgrim is generally able to complete *ʿumra* in a few hours, in comparison to Hajj, which has to be completed in five specific days of the year.

On the eighth of Dhū l-Ḥijja the first night of the Hajj proper, pilgrims travel to the tent camps of Minā, some eight kilometers from Mecca, where they spend the night (Matthews and Matthews 1996). Following their night in Minā, pilgrims travel a distance of 14.4 km on the ninth of the month of Dhū l-Ḥijja (known as *Yawm ʿArafat* or Day of Arafat) to Mount Arafat and its plain where the most important rite of the Hajj takes place: *wuqūf* (the standing).[28] Without this rite, the Hajj is considered void and unacceptable.[29] On Mount Arafat and its plain pilgrims perform the *ẓuhur* and *ʿaṣr* prayers together at midday at Masjid Namira and continue with individual and group *duʿāʾ* supplication prayers from the afternoon until sunset.[30] In these prayers, they ask God to forgive their sins and accept their pilgrimage. They also read from the Qurʾan and make *duʿāʾ* prayers for family, friends, and humanity at large.

Figure 3: Mount Arafat during Hajj as documented by pilgrims (Mecca, 20/08/2018)[31]

[28] Mount Arafat, sometimes also called Mount Arafah (*Jabal ʿArafāt* or *ʿArafah*) is a granite hill about 20 km east of Mecca (cf. Sardar 2014).
[29] Arafat is said to contain the 'Sacred Precinct' where it is said that Adam and Eve made a sacrificial offer (to God) at al-Muzdalifa and recognized each other at Arafat (Meri 2004, 232).
[30] Masjid Namira or Namira Mosque is located on the plain of Arafat.
[31] Pilgrims shared this image with me and gave me the permission to use it.

In Arafat, some pilgrims stay in the shade of tents sheltered from the midday sun while others scale the sides of the Mount of Mercy.[32] During the *wuqūf* hours, pilgrims commemorate a similar gathering that took place when the prophet Muhammad performed the 'Farewell Pilgrimage' and delivered his last sermon during his own Hajj in 632 CE (Zadeh 2015). The gathering at Arafat is seen as an assembly which is also a symbolic reminder of Judgement Day (Mols and Buitelaar 2015, 4).

At sunset, all pilgrims hasten out of the valley; this departure is sometimes called *nafra*, and inch their way through the narrow mountain pass of Muzdalifa. In Muzdalifa, the pilgrims spend the night praying in the open under the desert sky. Here, pilgrims also collect pebbles that are 'ammunition' for the following day when they perform the next rite of Hajj: *rajm* (stoning [the devil]) (Maqsood 2008). The rite of *rajm* or *ramī* starts at sunrise on the tenth day of Dhū l-Ḥijja taking place at the *jamarāt*, which constitute three walls (formerly pillars) symbolizing the devil. This rite commemorates Abraham's chasing away the devil when the latter tried to persuade Abraham to disobey God and refrain from offering his son Ishmael (Matthews and Matthews 1996).[33] Pilgrims hurl seven pebbles, one by one, at the largest of these pillars, representing the devil. After the stoning, each pilgrim offers an animal sacrifice commemorating the sacrifice that God ultimately accepted from Abraham in place of his son.[34] Simultaneously with the pilgrims who perform the Hajj near Mecca, Muslims around the world celebrate *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* or *ʿīd l-kbīr* as it is often called in Morocco (the Feast of Sacrifice),

[32] Mount of Mercy is another name for the Mount of Arafat (cf. Wensinck and Gibb 2012).

[33] According to the Islamic tradition, Abraham was told to sacrifice his son (as a test from God). The devil tried to stop God's command from being obeyed by visiting Hagar, Ishmael, and Abraham. Every time the devil said that Abraham was going to sacrifice his son, each person answered that if God commanded it, they should obey. When Abraham finally attempted to sacrifice Ishmael, God told the former that he had fulfilled the command and Ishmael was to be spared and replaced with an animal sacrifice (cf. Qur'an 37: 101-107).

[34] Animal sacrifice for pilgrims nowadays consists of symbolically buying a sacrifice coupon of 460 riyals (around 112 Euros) as of 2016 to have a sheep, ram, etc. slaughtered on their behalf.

making their own sacrifices of sheep, goats, cattle or camels (Al-Sawydani, Badarinath, and Douglas 1995).[35]

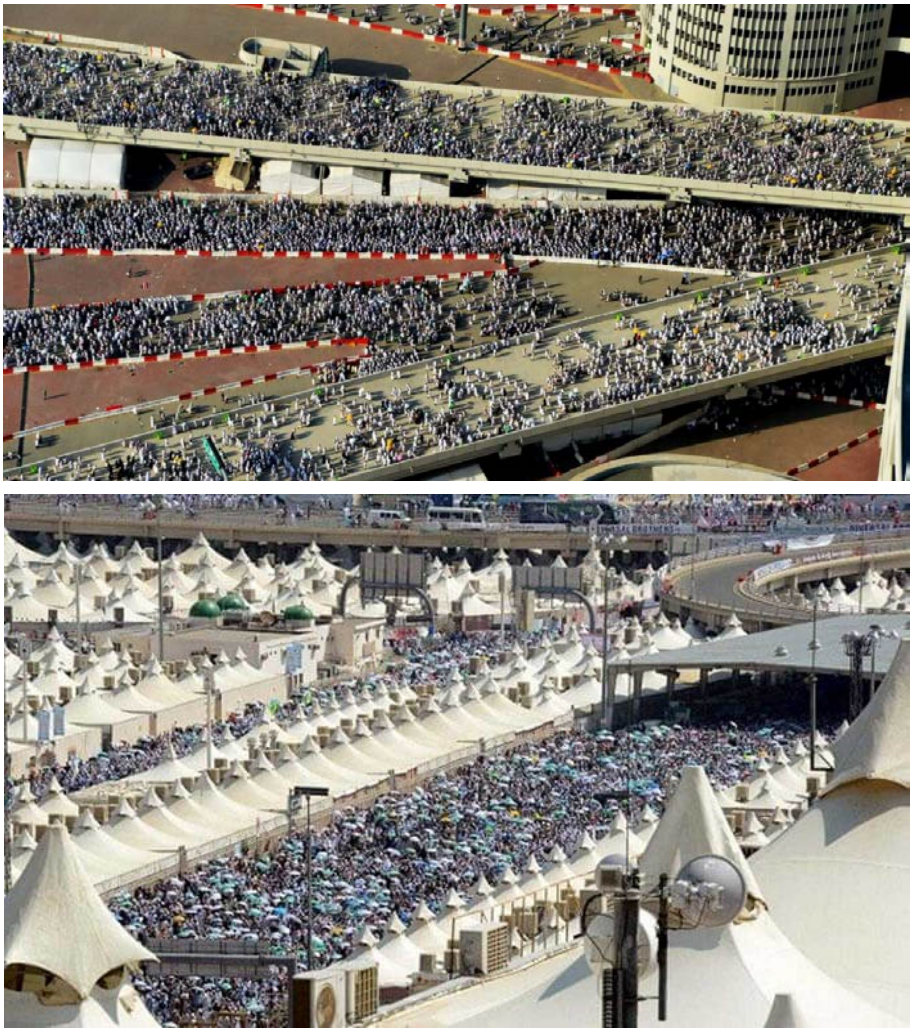

Figure 4: The way to the *jamarāt* (top) and Minā tents (bottom) during the Hajj season (in *al-ṣabāḥ* newspaper, Morocco, 01/10/2015)

Following the first stoning of the devil, men have their hair and beard shaved off (*ḥalq)* or shortened (*taqṣīr)* and women cut off a lock of their hair (Hammoudi 2006). This rite concludes the Hajj proper. Pilgrims

[35] I will refer to *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* (the Feast of Sacrifice) throughout the thesis as *ʿīd l-kbīr* to remain as close as possible to the way it is often called in Morocco.

may then take off their *iḥrām* clothing if they wish to do so and return to Mecca where they perform another *ṭawāf* known as *ṭawāf al-ifāḍa*, which includes seven anticlockwise circumambulations around the Kaʿba. Then, they have to return to Minā to spend two more nights. Most pilgrims, however, for practical reasons of transport and time, stay in Minā for two more days during which they repeat the rite of stoning during the eleventh and twelfth of Dhū l-Ḥijja and then return to Mecca and perform *ṭawāf al-ifāḍa*. Before leaving Mecca, pilgrims are advised to visit the Kaʿba one last time and perform a farewell *ṭawāf: ṭawāf al-wadāʿ*.

In addition to the mandatory rites of Hajj, many pilgrims pay a visit to Medina for a few days either before or after their pilgrimage. Some 240 km north of Mecca, Medina was the city where the prophet Muhammad lived for ten years, where the first Muslim community was established, and where the prophet is buried. While Mecca is imagined as the religious center for Muslims, Medina is considered the second holiest city in Islam and also occupies a role in the social and religious imagination of Muslims (Kenny 2007). In Medina pilgrims visit the Mosque of the prophet Muhammad where they can visit his grave along with the graves of his companions and successors Abu Bakr and Omar. For many people, the visit to the Prophet's tomb is a highly emotional aspect of the pilgrimage experience although not a rite of the Hajj itself. While the rites of the Hajj take place on five specific days each year, pilgrims often spend three to four weeks in Mecca and Medina where, in addition to the performance of pilgrimage, they engage in visiting the sites where the Prophet and his companions once lived.

Strictly defined, the Hajj is required only once in a lifetime for adult Muslims who are physically and financially able (Bianchi 2004; Aziz 2001; Robinson 1999; Peters 1994). However, the significance of the Hajj and the impact of the rites described above, live on and assume great importance in the lives of pilgrims and in their wider life worlds which can be seen in numerous accounts of pilgrims (Bianchi 2004; Wolfe 1997; Peters 1994; Scupin 1982). The Hajj, then, is not only an individual religious undertaking of devotion for Muslims, but is also a global annual event that embraces political, social, economic, and intellectual aspects

(Ryad 2017). In addition, the Hajj itself often represents the culmination of years of spiritual preparation and planning (Gatrad and Sheikh 2005, 133). As if to mark its personal and social significance, once they have completed the pilgrimage, pilgrims are given the honorific title *al-ḥājj*, for males, or *al-ḥājja,* for females and the legacy of Hajj manifests itself in their everyday lives. [36]

A brief history of the pilgrimage to Mecca from Morocco

As the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina is considered the most important travel event for Muslims on both communal and personal levels (Sardar 2014), Moroccan history of the Hajj is as old as Islam in the region. Morocco itself has been inhabited by Amazigh tribes for least 5,000 years before the arrival of Islam.[37] Ever since its arrival to what is now Morocco, Islam has been an important aspect of people's culture and identity (Sadiqi 2018).[38] The first documented African pilgrimages to Mecca, however, were from Cairo during the era of the Fatimid dynasties (909 - 1171) (Ochsenwald 1980). These early Muslims, traveling in camel caravans across the Sinai Peninsula to the Hijaz region of Arabia where Mecca is located, established a route that was used continuously until the twentieth century (Ibid). Moroccan historian Muhammad Al-Manuni (1953) mentions that the history of the Moroccan journeying to Mecca

[36] The terms *al-ḥājj* and *al-ḥājja* refer to those who are in the act of performing the pilgrimage. In some Muslim communities, it also relates to older persons regardless of having performed the Hajj. In Morocco, addressing older people *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja* is a sign of politeness (cf. Peters 1994).

[37] The Amazigh or Berber are the indigenous people of Morocco. Throughout this thesis I will refer to them as Amazigh, which is the term they use to describe themselves.

[38] The Muslim conquest of what is now Morocco took place between 705 and 740 (Munson 1993). Musa Ibn Nusayr is believed to have established the Arab rule in the territory of present-day Morocco between 705 (or 706) and 708 (or 709) (Abun-Nasr 1987). In 710, the Caliph of Damascus appointed Salih ben Mansour as the first governor of the first Muslim empire in Morocco, called Nokour, after a river south of El Hoceima in the central Rif (Obdeijn, De Mas, and Hermans 1999, 41). Islam was the official religion of both Arab and Berber royal dynasties since the eighth century. The official Islamic school in Morocco is the Sunni Maliki school, itself based on shariʿa (Islamic judicial law) (Abun-Nasr 1987).

(*rakb al-ḥājj* or *rakb*) dates back to the middle of the times of the Almohads, the Moroccan Amazigh Muslim empire founded in the twelfth century.

By the thirteenth century, pilgrim routes across North Africa from as far west as Morocco linked with the Cairo caravan to Mecca (cf. Sardi 2013, 169-174). Pilgrims from Morocco either travelled in small groups, or, ideally, accompanied the great Hajj caravan which carried merchants and pilgrims every year from Morocco to Cairo (Al-Manuni 1953). Composed of pilgrims, merchants and guards, the great caravan often had a thousand or more camels (Ibid). Covering perhaps twenty miles a day and visiting the famous Islamic mosques of Tlemcen (Algeria) and Kairouan (Tunisia), before reaching Egypt, the journey to Mecca in its essence entailed moving with ease beyond borders that today exist between north African countries. In the thirteenth century, few west African pilgrims completed the pilgrimage in less than two years, and the average time was eight years (Birks 1977, 47; Al-Manuni 1953).

Several Moroccan scholars and travelers documented their journey to the Hijaz including their accounts, news, and the performance of the Hajj like Ibn Qunfud al-Qusnaṭīnī and Muhammad al-ʿAbdarī (cf. Al-ʿAbdarī 1999).[39] Al-ʿAbdarī, for example, started his journey from the Haha tribe (near Saoira) on the 25th of Dhū l-Qiʻda 688/1289. He travelled from the west to the east of Morocco to Talmisan. Talmisan was a central location for Moroccan travel where pilgrims gathered to start their journey. Al-ʿAbdarī estimated that around one thousand pilgrims departed on the same journey to Mecca (cf. Al-ʿAbdarī 1999). The journey meandered from Morocco through Algeria and Tunisia, Qairawan and Trablus, to Alexandria and Cairo before reaching the Hijaz (Ibid). In the fourteenth century, Ibn Battuta travelled from Morocco to the Hijaz with the main purpose of carrying out the Hajj in the holy places of Mecca and

[39] It was common among religious scholars of North Africa to combine pilgrimage with a visit to the major centers of the Islamic world and even produce written account of their travels (cf. Faroqi 1994). Al-ʿAbdarī, for example, travelled to Mecca in 668/1289 to perform the Hajj and documented his journey (Al-ʿAbdarī 1999). Other travelers from Morocco to Mecca include Al-Qaysī (1968) and Al-ʿAyāshī (2006).

Medina. He arrived in Mecca in 1326, a year and four months after leaving home, and was able to complete his pilgrimage (Al-Manuni 1953).

It is worth mentioning here that the journey, by either land or sea routes, involved months of hardships and dangers, including sea – or sand – storms, pirates and bandits as well as diseases and other dangers to health (Ibid). Despite these difficulties, more pilgrims continued to join the journey to Mecca, especially during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, through trans-Saharan caravans travelling from Morocco to Egypt. From the sixteenth century onwards, the volume of pilgrims increased as the Ottomans fortified the route of the Egyptian caravan (Shair and Karan 1979, 600). By the seventeenth century, travelers often reached Egypt after a voyage on a French ship or by travelling with a caravan which travelled North Africa from west to east, and they then would join the annual pilgrimage caravan from Cairo (Faroqi 1994, 142). However, frequent Bedouin attacks on pilgrim caravans and political instability arising from the involvement of the Ottomans in regional conflicts resulted in a declining trend in the number of pilgrims in the nineteenth century (Shair and Karan 1979, 599-560).

Beginning in the nineteenth century, Moroccan pilgrims began traveling via a sea route through the southern Mediterranean to Alexandria on their way to Mecca. By the early 1900s railways were transporting thousands of affluent pilgrims, while the less affluent simply walked along the tracks (Ochsenwald 1984, 1980). In the 1950s, Moroccans started travelling by air. However, land routes continued to be popular. On the one hand, this was due to poverty; on the other, to the desire of pilgrims to visit famous places of Islam in North Africa. Later, closed borders, conflicts and other post-colonial factors limited over-land travel.

Figure 5: Screenshots from a short video documenting the pilgrimage to Mecca from Morocco in 1949[40]

In general, a long historical tradition of travel to Mecca exists in Morocco and shows little sign of abating. In 2019, the population of Morocco was estimated at 36.66 million, of whom 99 percent are Sunni Muslims.[41] Morocco is a diverse society, with people drawn from a variety of educational and social backgrounds and of different ethnic backgrounds, that is, identifying as Arab or Amazigh in addition to a small number of Christian and Jewish Moroccans (Boum 2013).[42] On

[40] The video shows groups of pilgrims boarding a ship and others waving from quayside. The French flag on the ship leaving the port is an indicator of French colonial organization of the Hajj as means to legitimize its power which can also be seen in British management of the Hajj during the same period (cf. Cooper 2019; Fichter 2019; Low 2008; Slight 2014). To view the video, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCKa2T6grKE

[41] Morocco Population 12/06/2019. Retrieved from http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/morocco/

[42] Historically, Morocco was home to a thriving Jewish community counting some 240,000 people (2.7 percent of the total population) before World War II

average, some 32,000 Moroccans perform the Hajj every year in addition to those who visit Mecca for *ʿumra* outside the season of Hajj.[43] Especially since the conditions of the pilgrimage, such as the means of transportation, have evolved over the years allowing a greater number of Moroccans to travel to Mecca, the pilgrimage continues to be extremely popular among Moroccans and many still describe it as a 'dream-wish' today. It remains true, however, that for the majority of Muslims, including many Muslims in Morocco, the Hajj is beyond reach because of their gender (see Chapter Seven), their financial situation, health issues, or because of the imposed quota system that allows only a small number of applicants to be issued with a Hajj visa (cf. Bianchi 2004, 11).
Many Moroccans try to substitute for the Hajj by performing the lesser pilgrimage, the *ʿumra.* According to a local official, during the years 2015 to 2019, an average of 140,000 Moroccans visited Mecca every year for *ʿumra*.[44] Throughout Morocco, as for Muslims in general, Hajj holds an important place in everyday life and popular culture (Boissevain 2012, 21-30; Haq and Jackson 2009). which will be the theme of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Organization of chapters

The key theme of this research, the pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj), its rites, and religious meanings were briefly explored in the introduction above. The rest of this thesis is divided into ten chapters. Chapter One is divided into two parts: theoretical and methodological frameworks. The first part attempts to situate this research within the larger anthropological debates on the subjects of pilgrimage, everyday life, and

(Boum 2013, 1). By 2013, however, fewer than 3,000 Jews resided in Morocco, principally due to their migration for Israel, Europe and the Americas (Ibid). In 2019, Pope Francis visited Morocco and pointed out the importance of religious diversity in Morocco addressing some 10,000 members of Morocco's Catholic community (which is around 30,000 in total with sub-Saharan Africans making up a large part of the overall number of Christians in the country).

[43] The number of pilgrims follows a quota system which will be discussed in a thorough manner in Chapter Two.

[44] Unpublished information which was gathered during fieldwork.

lived religion (other concepts and theoretical points of reference will be introduced in subsequent chapters). The second part of Chapter One presents the research site and the 'story' of my ethnographic fieldwork including the methodological narrative, questions regarding an ethnographer's identification and reflections on fieldwork in a multi-sited ethnography.

The remaining nine chapters are divided into three parts. Each part opens with a vignette that functions as an 'overture' which gives a brief glimpse into how the Hajj features in the writings of Moroccans, their daily lives and even their humorous encounters. Chapters Two, Three, and Four are organized in chronological sequence: before, during and after the Hajj. They reflect the ways in which pilgrims attach different significance to each stage of their Hajj experience. These three chapters are especially relevant in the light of question one, which addresses the relationship between the *desire* to go on Hajj, the *experience* of Hajj performance and the *act* of becoming a *ḥājj/ ḥājja* followed by the process of self-fashioning in everyday life that accompanies the return home.

Chapter Two examines the meanings aspirant pilgrims give to their pilgrimage, their expectations and motivations. The chapter shows how these meanings are integrated into the personal and group rituals including the *qurʿa*, a term meaning a 'draw in the sense of a lottery' which determines who gets the chance to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. I suggest that this period of time is significant for both spiritual and practical preparations for Hajj. The Hajj requires the mobilization of one's financial resources as well as the personal management of procedures. I suggest that both the administrative and religious rites that take place before the Hajj have a function in the construction of the overall religious experience.

Chapter Three examines how pilgrims narrate and refer to their pilgrimage experience. I show how through their narratives, pilgrims refer to the Hajj, among other ways, as a sensory experience. I argue that pilgrims make frequent reference to the senses not only to describe their physical experiences but to sustain and retain their Meccan encounters,

crystallizing their feelings and emotions in Mecca in order to relive and reawaken the experience through narration of it when they return to Morocco.

Chapter Four reflects on the lives of pilgrims after the performance of the Hajj. I ask how the pilgrimage to Mecca influences the everyday life of pilgrims in relation to their personal, religious and social practices and how they are viewed and treated within their local community on their return. I discuss the expectations of family, personal networks and wider community members concerning the comportment of post-pilgrimage and the demands made on those who have performed the pilgrimage. I also discuss the struggle of pilgrims who seek to manage the polarities between 'staying on the right path' and 'straying' from it.

In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, the focus shifts to specific questions regarding the Hajj: national identifications, belonging and the politics of the pilgrimage, as well as gender issues. Here, I strive to answer the second sub-question in this thesis: how is the pilgrimage to Mecca and the meanings attributed to it by Moroccans, informed by various aspects of identity politics and different webs of power relations within which various categories of pilgrims and non-pilgrims habitually operate?

Chapter Five begins with the questions of identity formation and looks specifically at the Hajj as a maker and marker of national identity. Even though the pilgrimage to Mecca is an opportunity for Muslims to transcend state barriers and social backgrounds, I argue that Moroccans' sense of their identification within their home country, and their belonging to it, intensify during and after the Hajj. The experiences and the different nationalities that pilgrims encounter in Mecca are crucial with regard to how they relate to and come to view their homeland. I argue that this experience is not only shaped by the pilgrims themselves but also by national discourses and media narratives by which the Hajj is used as an occasion for national political mobilization by the government of Morocco.

While in Chapter Five I reflect on national identification and political issues related to the Moroccan government, in Chapter Six, I

explore how Moroccans reflect on the pilgrimage experience in relation to the Saudi management and control over the Hajj procedures. Moroccan views of the modernization of the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi regulations, and the political authority which the Saudi state exercises over millions of Muslims who travel to Mecca every year are considered in this chapter.

In Chapter Seven I examine the role of Hajj in relation to women's agency, more specifically to their physical and social mobility. While more female pilgrims are able to perform the pilgrimage today, women continue to face many challenges before they are able to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. This chapter analyses the Hajj narratives of Moroccan women from different backgrounds.

Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten interlink by sharpening the focus on some specific aspects of the embeddedness of the pilgrimage to Mecca, and of Mecca itself, in Moroccan everyday life. These chapters are crucial in providing answers to the third sub-question of this thesis, tackling how the pilgrimage to Mecca is integrated into social practices and the cultural products of everyday life in Morocco.

Chapter Eight focuses on a local pilgrimage known in Morocco as the Pilgrimage of the Poor. Here, I show how people who are unable to make the pilgrimage to Mecca try to find other religiously significant sites locally where they perform similar rites to those taking place in or near Mecca during the Hajj season. I also reflect on how these sites become an issue of contestation among Moroccans.

In Chapter Nine, I discuss the social and cultural embeddedness of the Hajj in everyday life in Morocco by looking specifically at Hajj features in local songs. In Morocco, different genres of music are popular among locals and the lyrics of those songs thematically convey the importance of the pilgrimage. These songs are played and performed in various settings and, for those who listen to them, they are a reminder of the Hajj and an opportunity to bring the pilgrimage into daily cultural practice.

In Chapter Ten, I continue with the cultural embeddedness discussed in the preceding chapter and examine local forms of storytelling. Moroccans in different settings tell stories featuring the Hajj.

Sometimes the pilgrimage is represented as a marker of morality and at other times as a reward, a sign of God's acceptance, or as a reflection on other Muslim practices. This chapter shows how the Hajj is intersected by, and interwoven with, the narratives Moroccans share at the micro-level. I argue that these stories give meaning to the lives of the narrators and construct their religious and moral identifications.

Following these ten chapters of the thesis, my conclusion reflects on the main findings of this research in relation to the research question and theoretical frameworks that inform the analysis. The thesis concludes with an epilogue that explores the visual nature of the Hajj and how Mecca and the pilgrimage are represented in the visual domain, becoming part of everyday life in Morocco.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides a general overview of the anthropological framework of pilgrimage, including some anthropological contributions to the study of Hajj in particular. It also includes a methodological reflection, first through a presentation of the 'story' of this research, of my interest in Morocco and the pilgrimage to Mecca and then I offer a reflection on my own position as a participant-observer and also consider aspects of my identity in the field.

Theoretical framework

In Islam, human actions are divided into *ʿibādāt* (human-to-God worship actions) and *muʿāmalāt* (human-to-human relations).[45] Islam itself is a religion (*dīn*) which consists of both beliefs [*īmān*] and practices [*islām*] (cf. Kazi 1966, 227-37). For reasons that I will explain later in this chapter, I take as a starting point Clifford Geertz's description of religion as a system of symbols which provides people with a model of and for the world, offering conceptions of a general order of existence which makes life intelligible and acceptable (Geertz 1975) to investigate how religious practices are applied in different ways to various cultural, political and personal contexts, through focusing on a major religious ritual: the pilgrimage to Mecca (cf. Asad 1983, 237-59).[46]

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[45] Islam itself can connote a geographic region (e.g. *dar al-islām*), a set of rules (*sharʿ/sharīʿa*) or a community (*umma*) (cf. Abel 2012; Denny 2012).

[46] Geertz states that for anthropologists, "the importance of religion lies in its capacity to serve, for an individual or for a group, as a source of general, yet distinctive, conceptions of the world, the self, and the relations between them, on the one hand - its model of aspect - and of rooted, no less distinctive 'mental' dispositions - its model for aspect - on the other" (Geertz 1973, 123). Talal Asad shows that definitions of religion themselves are the 'historical product of discursive processes' (Asad 1993, 29). He argues that discourses on religion and secularism have been shaped in close entanglement with Western European

Pilgrimage, in Islam - and other religions - is often discussed as a central aspect of religion that includes both beliefs and practices (cf. Rahimi and Eshaghi 2019). In personal accounts of the Meccan pilgrimage, Moroccans speak about how they see themselves as Muslims, a matter which plays a key role in their self-narratives and becomes an indicator of who they are (cf. Buitelaar and Zock 2013). Thus, the pilgrimage as a practice is not limited to a number of rites that pilgrims engage in when they visit Mecca. The practice is also related to how they bring to it their understanding of the pilgrimage, framing the ways in which they engage with other religious, social, and cultural practices. In what follows, I will therefore embed the thesis in a larger framework on the study of both pilgrimage and Islam, from an anthropological perspective in particular.

The Anthropology of pilgrimage

Émile Durkheim's 1912 classic, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, provides a starting point for looking at 'the sacred' and at pilgrimage from a social scientific point of view. Durkheim characterizes religious festivals in small-scale, aboriginal societies as unifying, morally re-energizing institutional moments. Subsequent anthropologists have invoked this functionalist theory of societal coherence. Although almost all pilgrims with whom I worked would assent to the celebratory aspect of the community of Muslims in the Hajj, they would also argue that it involves more than that. Many pilgrims also report a powerful feeling of

modernity. This makes it highly problematic to rely on universal definitions of religion. Building upon Asad's criticism of Geertz's definition of religion, which emphasized meaning over practice (cf. Asad 1983, 237-59), this thesis uses other modes of analysis focusing on the embeddedness of the pilgrimage in the lives and practices of Muslims (cf. Coleman 2002; Meyer 2006). The focus in the thesis is therefore - at least as much if not more - on practice and on affect including sensory experiences and emotions as it is on beliefs.

unity with fellow believers, creating a sense of unity within the *umma*, the global, not merely local, Muslim community (cf. Malcolm X 1965).[47]

The transition that pilgrims experience is what makes pilgrimage a '*rite of passage*', a term coined by Arnold van Gennep (Gennep et al. 1977; Gennep 1960). According to Gennep, 'rites of passage' mark life stage or seasonal transitions and are characterized by three phases: a separation or detachment from the ordinary leading to an ambiguous 'outsider' status, a 'between' phase of ambiguity or 'liminality' which is finally resolved into a new stability (aggregation) and the resumption of ordinary life. These three stages of separation, transition, and incorporation can be recognized in the activities that pilgrims undertake preceding, during and after the Hajj. The experience of Moroccan pilgrims fits neatly into this overview of the whole experience: before leaving for Mecca, pilgrims engage in settling their debts, asking forgiveness from family and friends, and collecting requests for special prayers. This and other such activities can be seen as part of the first, separation stage.[48] The transition to the liminal phase arguably starts as soon as pilgrims embark on their journey. Entering the state of *iḥrām* marks another important transition that continues until pilgrims conclude the rites of Hajj after which they enter the incorporation phase (cf. Gennep 1960, 185). The incorporation phase is often concluded when pilgrims return home as new pilgrims (*ḥujjāj*).

The work of Gennep on rites of passage was taken up by Victor Turner, who developed, in the late 1960s, a theoretical model of pilgrimage. In his work, Turner recognizes pilgrimage as a movement from familiar structure and the everyday to highly ritualized life, characterized by 'anti-structure' or the absence of structure. Through the journey to a distant place, the pilgrim is separated from the rule-governed structures of mundane social life, becoming both

[47] In Malcolm X's often cited diary, he speaks about his pilgrimage to Mecca as "We were truly all the same (brothers) -because their belief in one God had removed the 'white' from their minds, the 'white' from their behavior, and the 'white' from their attitude" (X and Haley 1965, 340).

[48] The next chapter provides a detailed description of the preparation for Hajj among pilgrims in Morocco.

geographically and socially marginal. Travelling away from one's home on pilgrimage offers an opportunity to shed one's conventional roles. As pilgrims distance themselves from the structure of normal, everyday life, they simultaneously move away from established hierarchies into a 'liminal' status, freed from the normal bonds of structure. In *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978), Victor Turner and Edith Turner argue that liminality produces a sensation of unity, *communitas*, and anti-structure as integral features of pilgrimage. The concept *communitas* is used to refer to "a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion" with other individuals, "which combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship" (Turner and Turner 1978, 250).

The rites of Hajj contain many elements that can be recognized as attributes of liminality, such as pilgrims bidding farewell to their beloved ones; entering the state of *iḥrām*, during which they refrain from clipping nails or cutting hair, and breaking away from routines of daily life in order to dedicate oneself fully to worshiping God. Hajj rites also contain many elements that can be recognized as generating *communitas*. What is experienced by Hajj pilgrims can be referred to as a unity of the global imagined *umma,* community of believers (cf. Makris 2007, 137). In line with aspects of this theoretical framework, in Chapter Three, I offer examples of Moroccan pilgrims' own narratives about their Meccan experiences in which some aspects of *communitas* can be recognized.

Turner's model had a significant impact on the anthropological study of pilgrimage and remained dominant throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s, focusing on the shared sense of community associated with pilgrimage (Mols and Buitelaar 2015). Many studies, however, critiqued the Turnerian approach for being too totalizing in its depiction of pilgrimage rather than taking into account the variety of pilgrimage experiences and the range of motivations for performing a pilgrimage (Dubisch 1995; Eade and Sallnow 1991; Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Crumrine and Morinis 1991; Sallnow 1981; Werbner 1989). For example, Michael Sallnow, studying group pilgrimage among Quechua Indians in the Andes, finds that pilgrims do not encounter one another in the

manner described by Turner (Sallnow 1987; 1981). Sallnow critiques the notion of *communitas* as characterizing accurately the behavior of pilgrims; indeed, far from expressing a sense of unrestricted fellowship, pilgrimage might be characterized by nepotism, factionalism, endemic competition and inner-community conflict.

In their edited volume *Contesting the Sacred* (1991), Eade and Sallnow challenge Turner's anti-structure hypothesis and *communitas*-paradigm by arguing that the empirical study of pilgrimages shows a marked presence of competing discourses, rather than *communitas,* on all levels and phases of pilgrimage. Thus, *communitas* may be one element of the pilgrimage experience but it cannot be assumed to exist in all pilgrimages. Eade and Sallnow further argue that social boundaries are not annihilated but reinforced throughout the pilgrimage experience (cf. Eade and Sallnow 1991; Sallnow 1991, 1981). They argue that if an essential, universalistic character of a pilgrimage site had to be identified, it would have to be the capacity of pilgrimage to absorb and reflect a multiplicity of religious discourses. Therefore, they suggest an alternative theory of pilgrimage as a realm of competing discourses. Eade and Sallnow advocate analyzing each specific pilgrimage in terms of its specific social setting and its specific historic and cultural meanings.

Examples from Muslim pilgrimage sites as arenas for competition among individuals and groups can be seen most clearly in studies focusing on local pilgrimages (*ziyāra*) to a *zāwiya* or a lodge of a saint or local shrine (cf. Flaskerud and Natvig 2018; Tapper 1990; Fox 1989). Very few studies have looked at contestation within the Hajj. An important example is Robert Bianchi's 2004 work that focuses on the politics of the Hajj in different Muslim-majority states. I reflect on the findings of these studies as I analyze the findings of my research among Moroccan pilgrims. I also use the work of Simon Coleman (2002) who discusses the issue of the contrast between the theory of *communitas* and contestation paradigms. Coleman (and others) sought to move the field of pilgrimage studies beyond the binary opposition between *communitas* and contestation, pointing out the potential for useful insights from both approaches. *Communitas* failed to take into account the mundane

conflicts inherent in pilgrimage and the fact that pilgrimage as an institution cannot actually be fully understood as a universal or homogeneous phenomenon but should be deconstructed into historically and culturally specific instances, which encompass the person, place and story. In the introduction to their edited volume *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, Coleman and Eade argue for an approach that takes into account both the behavioral patterns that may be observed in pilgrimage and the embeddedness of pilgrimage in the everyday social world of pilgrims (Coleman and Eade 2004).

In addition to the studies already mentioned, many scholars focus on unity and cohesion of the Hajj which are also relevant to this thesis (cf. Clingingsmith, Khawaja and Kremer 2009; Haq and Jackson 2009; McLoughlin 2009; Coleman and Elsner 1995). For example, in the study carried out by Clingingsmith, Khawaja and Kremer (2009) among Pakistani pilgrims, the findings show that attending the Hajj leads to feelings of unity, equality and harmony with fellow Muslims, as well as more favorable attitudes towards women. The study also reflects increased belief in peace and harmony with adherents of different religions. Other scholars, nonetheless, showed evidence of tensions, differences, and even conflicts in the experience of Hajj. An example of discussion of these conflicts is the work of Moroccan scholar Abdellah Hammoudi who, in his book *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of a Pilgrimage,* details many insight into the Hajj (Hammoudi 2006). The book narrates the story of the author himself, who carried out the pilgrimage in 1999. Hammoudi acknowledges that his pilgrimage is radically different from those historically carried out by earlier pilgrims. While narratives of those earlier trips focus on the hardships and difficulties of the road, these are somewhat different challenges to the difficulties faced by pilgrims today (most of whom stay in hotels). Nevertheless, the author makes a case for continuity of experience both in relation to the physical challenge of the journey, albeit modified because of the passage of time, and the transformation he experienced during the pilgrimage.

Other studies have examined the pilgrimage of Muslims in the West, especially in relation to diaspora communities. Some examples include

the work of Seán McLoughlin (2013, 2010, 2009) on the pilgrimage of Pakistani Muslims in Great Britain, the research of Farooq Haq and John Jackson on the Hajj experiences of Pakistani and Pakistani-Australians pilgrims (Haq and Jackson 2009), as well as Carol Delaney's study on the pilgrimage of Turkish migrants in Germany (1990). Several collective volumes also exist on the Muslim pilgrimage, including the edited volume of Luitgard Mols and Marjo Buitelaar (2015) which includes several case studies on the Hajj, the more recent volume *Muslim Pilgrimage in the Modern World* edited by Babak Rahimi and Peyman Eshaghi (2019), and the forthcoming volume *Muslim Women's Pilgrimage to Mecca and Beyond: Reconfiguring Gender, Religion and Mobility* edited by Marjo Buitelaar, Manja Stephan-Emmrich and Viola Thimm. There is also a range of academic studies that look at pilgrimage through various lenses, for instance in relation to tourism (Jamal, Raj, and Griffin 2018; Timothy and Olsen 2006), historical encounters (Ryad 2016), as well as pilgrimage and globalization (Quinn, and Keely 2018; Hyndman-Rizk 2012; McIntosh, Reader 2007; Bianchi 2004).

Out of all the complex theoretical analyses existing in the scholarly literature, one can conclude a simple truism that the Hajj is both an individual and social experience, historical and contemporary, religious and mundane, and includes aspects of both *communitas* and contestation. To put it in the words of Barbara Metcalf:

> By undertaking the Hajj, the pilgrim in principle affirms his individual responsibility for obedience to God and claims his place among the community of faithful people (1990, 100).

In summary, there has been a shift in the study of pilgrimage over time mainly from ideas of *communitas* to those of conflict and contestation and more recently towards looking at the experience from the perspective of its embeddedness in everyday life. It is also important to situate this study within the broader framework of the anthropology of Islam since it takes an anthropological/ethnographic approach when looking at the lives of pilgrims and the socio-cultural dimensions of the everyday lives of Muslims.

Islam as a lived religion

This work falls within the broader scholarship of 'anthropology of Islam' (as opposed to being strictly a study of the Hajj, or an anthropology of pilgrimage). An obvious starting point in the study of the Anthropology of Islam is the work of Talal Asad in his article, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam" (Asad 1986). In this and later publications, Asad argues that studies should take Muslims seriously on their own terms and calls for anthropologists to examine Islam as "a discursive tradition that connects variously with the notion of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges" (Ibid, 7). Asad argues that Islam "is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artefacts, customs and morals. It is a tradition" (1986, 14). This article, together with Asad's wider body of work (Asad 2003; 1993; 1986) has been influential for many anthropologists who have taken up his enquiries about religion and the mundane, as well as studies of morality, piety, and Muslim practices of everyday religiosity (cf. Schielke 2010).

Employing Asad's framework, which views practices of (self-) discipline as a defining aspect of the formation of religious subjects (Asad 1993), scholars such as Lara Deeb (2006), Charles Hirschkind (2006), Saba Mahmood (2005), and Humeira Iqtidar (2011) have foregrounded pious practices and Islamic revivalist organizations and lifestyles as a locus of agency. Mahmood (2005) and Hirschkind (2001, 2006), for example, with different emphases, take Asad's work further and argue for an anthropology of morality that focuses on the ways in which moral personhood and responsibility are created and practiced. Mahmood, in her study *Politics of Piety* (2005), highlights the micro-social ethical practices of women in the Egyptian piety movement. Hirschkind follows a similar line of reasoning in his work on cassette tape sermons in Cairo. Cassette ethics, Hirschkind argues, are conceived as part of the moral reform of society, of creating Islamic ethical sensibilities and dispositions in more or less open competition with profane ideals and practices (Hirschkind 2006).

The focus on the cultivation of religious virtues and dispositions of ethics and piety by Mahmood and Hirschkind has been inspirational for many anthropologists (with acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of approaches in each one of these) who focus on the cultivation of piety through the study of deliberate and habituated acts of ethical self-formation. However, later researchers have critiqued the way the project of moral reform and prioritizing piety excludes the plurality of ethical registers with which religious actors engage (cf. Deeb 2011; Schielke 2010). Instead, scholars such as Magnus Marsden (2005) and Samuli Schielke (2015; 2010) have highlighted the ambivalent and unpredictable ways in which ordinary Muslims navigate between religious considerations on the one hand, and non-religious concerns, aspirations, and passions on the other. In Schielke's words, there is "too much Islam in the anthropology of Islam" (2010, 2). The risk Schielke identifies is that of essentialism; presenting a single aspect of the life of a Muslim, those pious moments, as standing for the whole. For most people, Schielke argues, moral subjectivities are characterized more by ambiguity and a diversity of referential frames than by a neat coherence. Anthropologists like Deeb and Schielke call for attention to be paid to the 'everyday' life and experience of people who happen to be Muslim, to recognize the "humanity of people on their own terms," to develop a "grounded and nuanced understanding of what it means to live a life" (Schielke 2010, 5). This move has resulted in an approach that privileges the study of everyday Islam.

A point of departure for the study of everyday life - in general - might be Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988) which examines life as it is lived and daily exchanges as a rich source of meaning for scholarly analysis. In this text, de Certeau turns his attention to what he sees as the creative poetics of the 'common man' in his patterns of interactions; he offers a microanalysis of the daily enactments and renegotiations which people undertake. De Certeau's account of the everyday thereby foregrounds creativity and resistance while simultaneously inscribing them within, rather than dislocating them from, existing norms and values.

Other scholars have reflected and magnified this approach to the idea of 'lived religion' by focusing on what people do and say in a specific context and how they experience, express, and shape their religion in everyday contexts (McGuire 2008, 12; cf. Schielke and Debevec 2012; Dessing et al. 2013; Ammerman 2007; Hall 1997). Nancy Ammerman, for example, argues that "understanding religion will require attention both to the 'micro' world of everyday interaction, and the 'macro' world of large social structures" (Ammerman 2007, 234). Meredith McGuire follows a similar argument in *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, in which she focuses on religion practiced, experienced, and expressed by ordinary people (McGuire 2008, 12).

Assuming that individuals continuously engage in making and remaking religion by undertaking religious activities, the religious lives of people are co-constituted by various, sometimes competing, priorities and experiences involving all dimensions of life (cf. Ammerman 2007). People's actual everyday experiences reflect their personal understanding and daily negotiation of their religion (McGuire 2008; cf. Toguslu 2015; Mines and Lamb 2010; Ammerman 2007; Orsi 2003; Hall 1997). This makes everyday life a key tool in the study of religion (Toguslu 2015). For this research, lived religion is explored through participant observation, by following pilgrims mainly through the public and private domains which make up people's everyday realms of existence. To address the subject of pilgrimage with reference to religion in the everyday life in Morocco, and to contribute to our understanding of lived religious processes in a Muslim context, I focus on how the pilgrimage to Mecca is embedded in the specificities of social and cultural practices, as well as the everyday lives of Moroccans.

An early example of the study of daily life in a Muslim setting is Lila Abu-Lughod's *Veiled Sentiments* (1986). In her ethnographic study of Egyptian Bedouin women, Abu-Lughod explores the functions of poetry in this society, a society which is honor-driven and where, arguably, the expression of a range of human vulnerabilities would be close to taboo in everyday interaction. However, Abu-Lughod's interpretation of the license which poetry gives to such expressions of vulnerability is

interesting. She sees the poems not as challenges or creative resistance to such moral norms. Instead she suggests that the site of poetry is itself a social convention, a 'cultural repertoire' for expression of this aspect of human experience.

Relevant to the chosen focus of my research, the most influential proponent of the turn to everyday Islam as a crucial site for enquiry might arguably be Samuli Schielke, starting with his article "Being Good in Ramadan" (2009). In this article Schielke examines the experiences and daily practices of 'ordinary Muslims' in a northern Egyptian fishing village during the month of Ramadan. This work of Schielke has been often cited by other scholars as an analytical touchstone (cf. Debevec 2012; Khan 2006).[49] In his essay, Schielke describes Ramadan as a time not only for fasting and praying but also for festive forms of social activities and fun, like football. Although "there is a general sense of increased social, moral, and pious commitment during Ramadan," Schielke writes, such a "focus on reward and piety" is temporally exceptional as the month of Ramadan stands apart from the rest of the year (2009, 26–27). In another article on "Second thoughts about the anthropology of Islam, or how to make sense of grand schemes in everyday life," Schielke argues for taking into consideration the complexities and ambiguities of everyday life that are informed by various cultural discourses simultaneously (Schielke 2010). Schielke argues that although people may habitually live in ways that conform to moral rules and religious conventions, it is also important to leave room for the ambiguities, contradictions, ambivalences and tensions between religion and daily life (Ibid). Discussing religiosity in Egypt, Schielke notes: "Rather than a competition between pious and secular sensory

[49] Although I focus on the work of Samuli Schielke as the often-cited proponent of this turn to everyday Islam, more studies can be found on the topic including Al-Muhammad (2012), Al-Muhammad and Peluso (2012), Das (2012), Debevec (2012), Khan (2006, 2012), Mittermaier (2012), and Simon (2009). I do not suggest any homogeneity to this literature and recognize the very different orientations and analytic attachments that animate these studies. I am interested in how all these works frame the everyday as a site of complexity, ambiguity, or encounter.

regimes, an unpredictable coexistence of different nuances, moments, and registers characterizes daily life…" (Ibid 2010, 11).

I agree with Schielke's critique but want to add that the paradigm of self-cultivation erases from our view not only various non-religious sensibilities, but also other modes of religiosity. Whereas Schielke seems to be of the view that there was "too much Islam" in the anthropology of Islam (Ibid 2010, 2), in my view, there is also too little Islam – or, rather, too little attention to the fact that there are varied and simultaneously coexisting modes of articulation of Islam. Some of these are geographically mediated or shaped by wider cultural discourse, whilst others vary from one individual subject to another. I want to suggest that self-identifying as a Muslim is significant in the context of the moral reasoning, whether through the directed work of ethical self-formation that a number of anthropologists have productively described, or in the process of accommodating the faith to the process of living one's life, with all its ambiguities, contradictions, and multiplicity of referential frames (cf. Beekers and Kloos 2017).

What I find in the narratives of my interlocutors in Morocco is that, although they are sometimes uncertain, doubtful, or – indeed – their daily lives show ambivalence, they nonetheless frame their religious lives in terms of an effort to be 'good Muslims'. Moroccan pilgrims sometimes acknowledge failure in the process of ethical formation. Thus, I find the work of Beekers and Kloos (2017) most relevant to this matter. In the introduction to the edited volume *Straying from the Straight Path: How Senses of Failure Invigorate Lived Religion*, David Kloos and Daan Beekers argue that the struggles inherent in everyday life can, in fact, contribute to productive avenues in the processes of ethical formation rather than being seen as setbacks or obstacles to it, given the appropriate, constructive reading of and learning from the perceived 'failure'. Therefore, as Kloos and Beekers argue, a comprehensive approach towards the religious subject should include both questions about religious commitment, success, social mobility, progress as well as questions about drawbacks, doubt, and sinfulness.

Since the religious lives of most Muslims are not necessarily governed by an internally coherent set of ethics or by a certainty about the place of religion in both public and private spheres, anthropologists working on Muslim societies have highlighted the prevalence of moral ambivalence, the ways in which individuals deal with conflicting "moral registers" (Schielke 2015, 53ff), or "multidimensional" selves (Simon 2014). I have chosen an ethnographic approach that takes into consideration the complexities in people's everyday lives and their motivations, experiences, practices, and uncertainties in dealing with such complexities. The study of everyday aspects of religion as lived by ordinary people has been advanced and promoted in several anthropological works including Schielke and Debevec's edited volume *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes,* in which the editors suggest that the religious realm cannot be separated from other everyday practices but rather reveal the "plural, complex, and essentially unsystematic nature of religion" (Schielke and Debevec 2012, 3).[50] As I am concerned with both the pursuits of pious self-formation as well as the doubt and ambivalence of pilgrims' everyday lives as part of ethical formation, I examine how - in their everyday lives - normative religiosity, moral norms, and ambivalences infuse one another.

This is my chosen emphasis. However, I am cognizant of the issues signaled in an article published in *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando (2015) warn against the excesses they perceive in current anthropological studies of 'ordinary

[50] Another significant edited volume on Islam as lived religion is that of Nathal Dessing, Nadia Jeldtoft, Jørgen Nielsen, and Linda Woodhead, *Everyday Lived Islam in Europe*. In this volume, the authors promote an approach to the study of Muslims and Islam in Europe through the avenue of the 'everyday'. In the first chapter of the volume, Linda Woodhead discusses the theoretical dimensions of the study of 'everyday life' focusing on the work of the aforementioned Michel de Certeau, in her argument that this approach can bring new insights in the study of religion. In the same volume, Nadia Jeldtoft discusses the importance of studying Muslims from an everyday perspective by drawing on the concept of the hypervisibility of Muslims in Europe. She argues that an everyday approach enables one to capture the complex nature of the Islamic practice and Muslim communities (2013).

Islam'. Fadil and Fernando argue that the turn to everyday Islam has created a problematic opposition between 'piety' and 'the everyday'. The advocates for this turn, they continue, "conceptualize normative doctrine and everyday practice as unconnected and, indeed, as opposed. Yet the fact that a commitment to a particular norm is often imperfectly achieved does not refute the importance attached to that norm" (Ibid, 70). Although Fadil and Fernando's argument is compelling, I disagree with their claim that the focus on the everyday aspects of religion as it is lived effectively presupposes, or privileges, the view that there is a resistance to religious norms or even a conflict between such norms and daily life. I believe that the critical response to "the piety turn" (2015, 81) does offer an important addition to the study of Islam by acknowledging the complexity and multiplicity of everyday life and the ways in which everyday life and religious perspectives and commitments interact.

I am seeking to show, through this ethnographic study, the coexistence of the possibility that thinking of piety, considering the search for a virtuous life, and of living fully within the concerns of the everyday can co-exist and be held in balance all at once. What might be most relevant to my approach is the response to Fadil and Fernando's piece by Lara Deeb (2015) who moves this debate forward by thinking of piety and the everyday together. Deeb proposes examining "both the ways the everyday is shaped by religious discipline and normativity *and* the ways that religious discipline and normativity are themselves produced through and change via everyday social life" (Ibid, 96; emphasis in the original; cf. Elliot 2016). In this thesis, I follow a similar line of inquiry by tracing the ways in which experience in everyday life can be found to affect, or even stimulate, the quest for religious ideals. When one studies how Muslims 'live' the Hajj, both the plurality of moral frameworks that are at play, and the ambivalence of everyday life can be noticed. For most Muslims, being a pilgrim, or a Muslim in general, I argue, is metaphorically 'a work in progress', an evolving process or a journey. People might want to live according to certain moral registers and aspire to be 'good Muslims' but their everyday life, cultural discourses, and *habitus* are characterized by complexities*;* the interplay

of the various factors that inform their practices and meaning making processes is what I seek to uncover in this study.[51]

For Muslims, Mecca is the most sacred city on earth and it has a powerful presence in their everyday life. Muslims face Mecca during prayers and many cherish Hajj-souvenirs brought home by pilgrims which are viewed as carrying Meccan sacredness. The pilgrimage in the everyday life of Moroccans epitomizes the meaning of Islam as "a grand scheme" (cf. Schielke 2010, 14). This means that the pilgrimage to Mecca becomes a guideline for life, a spiritual 'watch' and 'compass', providing meaning and direction to everyday concerns and experiences (cf. Tweed 2006).[52] Religion can serve as a basis for the production, legitimization and contestation of individual and group identities and social ties. Such a perspective embraces moral regimes and religious rules, but also leaves room for the ambiguities, contradictions, ambivalences and tensions between religious ideals, for instance as an expectation of increased piety after the Hajj, and the daily lives of pilgrims. Within my research, I aim to show how the pilgrimage to Mecca might encapsulate the ultimate religious, spiritual value for Muslims and how such value may, at times, be actively operant within the realms of the mundane, as a means of reflecting, absorbing and interpreting every day concerns, worries, and other debates, blurring the demarcation between religious and non-religious aspects of life. In this way, people bring expectations of piety and guidelines for everyday life and Hajj into dialogue with each other.

As I have already mentioned, as one would expect, Muslims in Morocco are diverse in their social backgrounds, and in their religious and cultural practices. As seen in the introduction of the thesis (vignette with Fatima), Moroccans may speak about themselves, and in relation to

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[51] *Habitus* is a concept used by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to refer to the physical embodiment of cultural capital. It also refers to the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that people acquire through their life experiences (cf. Bourdieu 1977).

[52] Tweed argues that religiosity is the itinerary and compass that guides people's journeys and orientation (Tweed 2006, 85).

the pilgrimage in particular, as Muslims, and, in their describing themselves as Muslims, they do so as Moroccan Muslims, and as members of a certain class, ethnicity, region, gender, age, etc. so that cultural notions related to their specific everyday lives interact with their conception of a Muslim life. During the period of my fieldwork, I was introduced to hundreds of such people, more or less formally interviewed dozens and lived with many families. I argue that in the stories that Moroccans tell about the pilgrimage to Mecca, people are informed by their *habitus* and the cultural discourses in which they are embedded. The view of pilgrimage as a socially and culturally constructed sign of distinction and as a form of 'capital' allows for a nuanced outlook on the pilgrimage as religious practice and on Muslim identity-construction in context. I make extensive use of ethnographic analysis to show that these issues are more complex phenomena than can be conveyed by a survey or non-ethnographic analysis is able to convey. An analysis of micro-level practices, everyday life, and individual narratives is necessary for providing a multidimensional image of meaning-making regarding religion, on personal, national and other levels. From this perspective, this research is significant as it provides not only an ethnography of a Muslim community, but also the first single-country ethnographic study of the Hajj – both with regrd to its performance, as well as its significance in every-day Moroccan life.

To explain my ethnographic approach to study the Hajj, it helps to reflect once more on Geertz' definition of religion as 'a system of symbols':

> which acts to establish *powerful*, pervasive, and long-lasting *moods* and *motivations* in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and *clothing these conceptions with such an aura* of factuality that the *moods* and *motivations* seem uniquely realistic (1973, 90; italics mine).

Religion, however, is not simply a system of symbols. Rather, one could argue, that it is specifically religious practices, most importantly rituals like pilgrimage which take people out of their everyday worlds and through addressing the senses, evoke emotions that contribute to the

italicized words in Geertz' definition. Thus it is less the conception of the 'general order' that is significant but rather the experience of it and what it can reveal about how a religion is practiced. As Tweed acknowledges in *Crossing and Dwelling*, all theoretical itineraries have their blind spots (Tweed 2006, 14-15, 21-22, 171-78). Hence the focus in this thesis adds aspects such as the sensory experience in its approach to religion, which can help in revealing some of the existing blind spots about the pilgrimage for Moroccans (cf. De Witte 2011; Meyer 2009, 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Tweed 2006). This ineffable and awe-inspiring sensory experience may seem to defy understanding (cf. Tweed 2006). However, by drawing on Birgit Meyer's work on 'sensational forms', I scrutinize how Moroccan pilgrims do try to give voice to their pilgrimage experiences by adopting the approach of paying attention to the intermingling of a person's cognitive, visceral, and emotional responses as they try to make sense of the situations that are affecting them in their experience of the pilgrimage (cf. Meyer 2015; Tweed 2006). Thus, building on theoretical perspectives of the anthropology of emotions and the senses, I will theorize the pilgrimage as a tool that can mediate religious experiences and generate religious sentiments, because of its capacity to influence the body and the human senses.[53]

An emphasis on lived religion implies recognition that religious feelings and meanings are not only produced through discursive traditions but also via particular bodily experiences (Promey 2014; Houtman and Meyer 2012; Morgan 2012, 2010; Orsi 2005; McDannell 1995; Asad 1993). Given the growing body of research that demonstrates the inseparable links between thinking, feeling, and embodiment (including those of Smith 2013; Meyer 2012; Lakoff and Johnson 2003; Massumi 2002; Damasio 1999), I approach the Hajj as a 'sensational form': a relatively fixed, authorized mode of invoking and organizing access to the transcendent. Pilgrims physically re-enact critical sacred dramas in Islamic historiography. As such, 'walking in the footsteps' of prophets Abraham and Muhammad is generally considered an

[53] For further discussion on the Hajj as a 'sensational form', see Chapter Three.

overwhelming experience that cleanses the soul. In this sense, this thesis views religion through the lens of the senses, with a predominant focus on visible and audible experiences.

In the face of this multifarious approach, considerable care was needed in selecting the ethnographic methods that I used during my fieldwork in Morocco. I describe and account for my choices in the next section.

A methodological narrative

My research project materialized thanks to a grant provided by The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for a project entitled, '*More Magical than Disneyland': Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca* which integrates ethnographic and textual historical research about modern pilgrimage to Mecca and consists of three sub-projects. The first sub-project studies the historical pilgrimage to Mecca through travelogues written between 1850 and 1945, the second examines how Hajj-accounts of Moroccan-Dutch pilgrims reflect trans-local senses of belonging, and the third is this ethnographic sub-project which investigates the sociocultural embeddedness of Hajj in contemporary Morocco. I learned about this project following the completion of my MPhil studies in the Anthropology of Development, in which identity, migration, and religion were central concepts.[54] At the time, I had worked for many years in refugee communities in Palestine and the Middle East and wanted to expand my knowledge of North Africa. More importantly, this project embodied several topics I was passionate about studying: Islam, Morocco, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Here I offer a glimpse of the impetus behind my choice of topic.

[54] My M.Phil dissertation explores a specific part of the Palestinian diaspora: Palestinian *Nakba*-refugees (Palestinians displaced in 1948) originally settled in Iraq, since then displaced during the Iraqi civil war, and now located in Santiago, Chile, a city containing an already established Palestinian diaspora (the Bethlehem diaspora of some 300,000 people). The dissertation explores the struggles of refugees, questions of their identity and belonging, and how they negotiate their relationship with the old well-established diaspora community in Chile (Al-Ajarma 2014).

Raised as a Palestinian refugee in Palestine, I had begun to work and advocate for refugee rights in my early teens. My Palestinian identity and status as a refugee were reflected in photography work, films, and stories that were published locally and internationally. Working on cultural and educational development in Palestine and advocating for refugee rights, I often met foreigners who visited my country to learn about its situation. In high school, for example, I volunteered as a cultural instructor, guiding tours in the Aida refugee camp where I lived. In the encounters with visitors to the camp, initially I was addressed as a Palestinian in relation to the Palestinian cause and struggle. More and more, however, I noticed myself being addressed in terms of religion. Often, I was asked if I could shake hands or even talk to men, how I was 'allowed' to travel alone, and if I expected to continue my education. Numerous times I was 'praised' for being outspoken, engaged in community matters, and committed to a cause which came as a surprise to many foreigners. Through such remarks, I came to realize the extent to which, in the imagination of those foreigners, Muslim women were oppressed and passive victims of their culture and communities. Thus, my background was reduced to what I might term as my 'Muslimness'.

When I represented Palestinian youth internationally at cultural events and even more when I studied in the UK, Norway and Chile, I saw further examples of the misperceptions of Muslim women and of Islam in general. In the dominant public discourse, Islam was portrayed as a static and monolithic religion that is intrinsically incompatible with modernity and western values. Simply, Muslims were represented as 'the other' (cf. Said 1999). Much of media coverage of Muslims was dealing with radicalism, security issues and violence. Thijl Sunier notes a similar pattern within the academic research field of Islam in Europe (cf. Sunier 2012). Therefore, just as I felt the need to convey more adequate information on the political plight of the Palestinians, a logical subsequent step for me was also to convey more accurate knowledge on Islam and Muslims. I felt the obligation to try and contribute to knowledge about Muslims and the diversity of their communities.

Ethnographic accounts of people's daily concerns can contest the assumption in the public discourse that Islam determines various dimensions of the lives of Muslims - that is by inference, *all* Muslims. The obvious problem with this commonly held, and damaging, view is that it presupposes the existence of a cultural essence; it also implies a view of culture as static. Therefore, the importance of the study of lived religion is that it looks at actual practice and belief as performed and held by people. The ethnographic mapping of the contextual presence of Islam in the everyday lives of Muslims is of crucial importance in the study of contemporary Islam. Ethnographic research provides us with insights into the wide variety of ways in which Islam is adopted in practice and defies stereotypes, expectations, and rigid classifications. Simultaneously, focusing on life issues that, albeit in different ways, all people encounter in their everyday lives, this ethnographic research contributes to de-exceptionalizing 'the other' and looking afresh at our taken-for-granted practices and views, thus challenging the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims that is often assumed in popular debates (cf. Buitelaar 2018).

On the basis of a literature study (some of which is outlined below) concerning anthropological research into Muslim societies in general, and Morocco in particular, during the first months of my research, I developed different questions that helped me operationalize relevant theoretical concepts concerning the pilgrimage to Mecca within the Moroccan context. In the first stage of my research, since I did not have access to Morocco at that point, I spoke to Palestinian pilgrims of both younger and older generations. I conducted interviews, visited pilgrimage souvenir shops in Bethlehem and Hebron, and documented Hajj graffiti around Palestinian refugee camps. The information thus collected served as pilot material for my research. In a later phase of my research I noted that some aspects of my early observations were replicated in Morocco, but through fieldwork I noted many others that were Morocco specific. The early local data collection in Palestine, then, allowed me to refine my research focus (cf. Al-Ajarma 2018).

Why Morocco?

The first detailed ethnographic information about Morocco – to my knowledge – comes from French colonial officers who administered the region – officially – from 1912 until 1956. Their reports, however, did not lead to what we would today recognize as systematic research and remained largely unpublished (Kraus 1998, 1). Obviously, as colonial officers, their perspective was not neutral but colored by power relations. It was only in the 1950s and 1960s when anthropological research of Morocco began to be more serious, that a more academic dimension was adopted, an approach which was less obviously influenced by colonial perspectives. Monographs on Morocco were published starting in the late 1960s, putting the country in the center of anthropological debates on Islam (Gellner 1981; Eickelman 1976; Geertz 1968), power relations (Bourqia and Gilson Miller 1999; Hammoudi 1997; Munson 1993), diversity (Rosen 2016; Combs-Schilling 1989), ethnographic writing (Newcomb 2010; Buitelaar 1993; Crapanzano 1980; Munson 1984), and the nature of fieldwork (Dwyer and Muhammad 1982; Rabinow 1977). In his book *Islam Observed* (1968), Clifford Geertz argues that Moroccan and North African societies have been best viewed as consisting of unstable and temporary small social networks that are constantly created and re-created by pragmatic individuals (Geertz 1979, 235; 1971). Geertz focuses on Islam as a religion that, for at least two centuries, has experienced upheavals and cultural changes that are still under way today.

The first comprehensive studies of religion in Morocco include Dale Eickelman's *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center* (1976), *The Aith Wargaghar of the Moroccan Rif* by David Hart (1976) and Ernest Gellner's *Saints of the Atlas* (1969). Although these studies provide rich ethnographic analysis of Moroccan tribes and some of their religious practices, they, nonetheless, apply a structural approach that neglects history and social change and presents a static view of the Moroccan communities (cf. Hammoudi 1974). Between 1965 and the 1970s, several anthropologists conducted research in Morocco including Clifford Geertz, Lawrence Rosen, Paul Rabinow, and Hildred Geertz.

Geertz and this group of researchers conceived of culture as a system of meanings and analysed the communities they worked with accordingly. Unlike Hart and Gellner, the latter researchers stayed mainly around Arabic speaking towns in the lowlands and were interested in the contemporary, expressed through symbols and actions. Nevertheless, most of these studies present a more or less coherent story of a rather static culture in Morocco (cf. Eickelman 1985; Hammoudi 1974). In the 1970s and 1980s respectively, Combs-Schilling and Kraus conducted fieldwork in Morocco, mainly focusing on ritual, behavioural strategies and tribal social organization (cf. Kraus 1998; Combs-Schilling 1989). Although relevant to this study by providing deep ethnographic insights into the life of the inhabitants of Morocco, insofar as they address pilgrimage, these studies focus on Morocco as a pilgrimage center and on one type of pilgrimage: saint veneration (cf. Bowen 1993; Eickelman 1976; Geertz 1968).

Morocco has rarely – if at all – been studied in relation to the Hajj as an ethnographic endeavor. As thousands of pilgrims, individually or in groups, visit local Moroccan shrines throughout the year, also tens of thousands of Moroccans perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. The existence of pilgrimage places, other than the holy shrine of the Kaʿba in Mecca, is a controversial subject among Muslims (Barnes 2006; Bhardwaj 1998; Eickelman and Piscatori 1990). Therefore, being both a point of departure for a pilgrimage journey and, at the same time, a pilgrimage destination, is what makes Morocco an interesting case to study.

Although there is a long heritage of travel accounts and personal narratives of Moroccan pilgrims, such as Ibn Battuta's famous travels book (originally published in 1829) and Abdellah Hammoudi's *A Season in Mecca* (2006) documenting his Hajj journey of 1999, less ethnographic work – if any – has been done on the pilgrimage to Mecca from a Moroccan perspective. Arguably, for Moroccans, as for many Muslims, the pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the key fields through which religiosity is expressed, a religiosity which is a core feature of their everyday lives. Although the pilgrimage to Mecca is the fifth pillar of Islam, it is only mandatory for those who are able to perform it (*istiṭāʿat al-sabīl*); there

is no sense of its being an absolutely required obligation for those physically or financially disadvantaged (cf. Tagliacozzo and Toorawa 2015; Donnan 1995, 69).[55] However, in practice, many people who might be considered exempt from this religious duty, do strive to perform the Hajj as it is highly valuable as a religious achievement and also as a marker of social and religious prestige in Morocco and throughout the Muslim world (cf. Yamba 1995; Eickelman and Piscatori 1990). Thus, in Morocco, being a *ḥājj* or *ḥājja* (someone who has performed Hajj) comes with considerable associated status which until recently was generally ascribed to older people (cf. Buitelaar 2015). It is relevant, therefore, to study this acquired prestige in relation to the micro-practices of everyday life in Morocco, assessing the added social value of Hajj in addition to its religious one. Most studies of Hajj have not featured a detailed discussion of how Hajj articulates and manifests its significance in everyday life and I believe this is worthy of exploration, hence this study.

Moreover, in Morocco, religion is highly valued at the official state level. As a predominantly Maliki and Sunni-oriented country, where the king is regarded as both the head of state and leader of the religious community (*amīr al-muʾminīn*), Islam is considered a central element in the Moroccan nationalist narrative (Sadiqi 2018; Hammoudi 1997).[56] The state bureaucracy manages and oversees the performance of the pilgrimage to Mecca, making it a matter intimately linked with national and state politics. The state, therefore, controls the process of the

[55] Several verses in the Qurʾan speak of the duty to perform the Hajj (cf. Qurʾan 2, 196 and 3, 97). The performance of the Hajj in these verses is conditioned on ability and well-being of the prospective pilgrim. Verse 97 of the third chapter of the Qurʾan, for example, after reaffirming that Mecca is the destination of pilgrimage, reads "…Pilgrimage to this House is an obligation by Allah upon whoever is able among the people…" (Qurʾan 3, 97). Ideally, a pilgrim should perform the Hajj if he or she is financially able and when all other debts have been discharged. Money should also not be borrow for the purpose of the pilgrimage and all financial matters and social obligations should be settled prior to a pilgrim's departure to Mecca (Donnan 1995, 69).

[56] For more information on the importance of Islam in the national imaginary of Moroccan diaspora, see Timmerman et al. (2017) and Toguslu (2015).

pilgrimage to Mecca and at the same time influences its meanings in the public sphere.[57]

Furthermore, Morocco offers a unique case study when it comes to religious identification in relation to social and cultural understandings of Islam. Morocco is a diverse country, shaped by various influences including Arab-Islamic, Amazigh and Saharan-Hassanic components, and also reflecting African, Andalusian, Hebraic and Mediterranean influences. The combination of these cultures is deeply rooted in Moroccan traditions and embedded in everyday life. In addition, Morocco has a long and deeply established Sufi tradition and its influence on both religious practices and politics is apparent in the country (Amster 2013; Cornell 1998; El Mansour 2020; Green 2018).

Although it can be argued that the Hajj today is easier than ever due to the advent of modern technologies, new modes of transportation, and the rise of a middle class that has placed the Hajj – and *ʿumra* – within reach of increasing numbers of Muslim pilgrims (Mols and Buitelaar 2015), there have been heated debates concerning the management of the pilgrimage, the problems involved in the Hajj registration process, and the Saudi control over this religious duty (cf. Fisk 2016; Bianchi 2016, 2015, 2004; Egan 2012; Amiri et al. 2011; Roy 2010). Therefore, Morocco can inform us about the ways in which the political and cultural spheres can influence, and are in turn influenced by, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Lastly, Morocco provides an interesting case study because little has been written about the pilgrimage within the context of the everyday lives of Moroccans. Most available studies regarding Muslim societies focus on piety movements rather than the context of everyday life.[58] The studies that appeared on the everyday lives of Muslims focus on several Muslim societies such as Egypt (Schielke 2015, 2012; Ismail 2006); Southeast Asia (Rahman 2015; O'Connor 2012; Adams and Gillogly 2011; Mines and Lamb 2010) and diaspora and Muslim communities in the West (Toguslu 2015; Sunier and Landman 2014; McLoughlin 2010). As

[57] See Chapter Five.
[58] For examples from Egypt, see Anani (2016), Winegar (2006), and Mahmood (2005).

already mentioned, the publications that have appeared about Islam in Morocco predominantly focus on Sufism and local pilgrimages, although a few appeared in recent years discussing aspects of the everyday life in Morocco including Rachel Newcomb's *Every Day life in Global Morocco* (2017) and *Women of Fes: Ambiguities of Urban Life in Morocco* (2010) as well as *Encountering Morocco: Fieldwork and Cultural Understanding*, edited by David Crawford and Rachel Newcomb (2013) and Marjo Buitelaar's comprehensive study *Fasting and Feasting in Morocco* (1993). Just as Buitelaar's (1993) study of fasting and feasting in Morocco was the first comprehensive ethnography of the fourth pillar of Islam, that is, the month of Ramadan, in a specific cultural setting, my study, to the best of my knowledge, is the first ethnographic work within the societal context of one country focusing on the fifth pillar of Islam: the Hajj.

Fieldwork: first encounters

From the time of my parents' pilgrimage, in addition to reading pilgrimage travelogues and watching it on TV, Mecca was, indeed, as the title of the broader research project indicates 'magical' in my imagination. As I mentioned previously, in preparation for this project, I conducted a short study of pilgrimage in Palestine, mainly looking at the objects and souvenirs pilgrims bring back from Mecca. I presented the findings of this study in March 2015 during my first visit to Morocco when I participated in the Spring School of the Dutch Research School for Islam Studies (NISIS), a five-day series of lectures and workshops which took place in Rabat. It was the third month of my contract for the PhD research on pilgrimage in Morocco, and, at the time, my research question had yet to be refined. During my short visit, I met many locals including Abdullah, a Moroccan researcher, who told me, when speaking about Morocco:

> Morocco is a country of rich cultural and religious diversity… This diversity makes any question about religion challenging to answer… Between official Islam and popular Islam, Sufism, Maraboutism, political Islam, and so on, it is not easy to identify one Islam but a plural: Islams… This said, however,

> Moroccans strive to perform their religious duties as Muslims, including the Hajj to Mecca…

As my research progressed, I found that, indeed, Morocco is a diverse country and Islam is a central aspect in the daily lives of many Moroccans. Since its arrival in the seventh century until today, Islam had influenced the social, political and cultural values of Moroccan society (cf. Geertz 1968). This thesis, therefore, aims to tell numerous stories about Moroccans, their daily lives, narratives and experiences. At the same time, it tells the story of my own participation and attempt to understand the lives of these people. In this section I reflect on my introduction to Morocco, to the field, and to the lives of Moroccans. I also discuss my expectations and struggles, the problems I encountered in the field and the solutions I found for them, and the journeys I made around Morocco in search of Mecca-related and pilgrimage-related stories and practices. I reflect on the relationships I built with the people with whom I talked and lived and how they allowed me into their lives and worlds; I recount the choices I made, the connections I created with people and places, the personal developments I went through, and the many surprises I encountered. By reflecting on all of these aspects of my research, I hope to provide a meaningful description that has shaped my relationship with the Meccan pilgrimage in Morocco (cf. Rabinow 1977).

Before my first visit to Morocco, my plan was to find people who could help me learn how to navigate their country. I knew a few Moroccans whom I had met in international conferences and others whom I contacted in person when I reached Rabat in March 2015. I also looked up and emailed local researchers, several of whom replied to my emails and my questions, including Abdullah, whom I mentioned above, Zakaria Rhani, and John Shoup who invited me to talk about my research to his students at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane. There was much more I wanted to do during my first visit to Morocco which proved impossible in the time available. However, this trip provided me with a number of resources for my further research. I used the following few months to deepen my knowledge in Moroccan literature, the Hajj, and

prepare for the first period of my fieldwork by applying for a Moroccan research permit.

When I moved to Fes for the first period of fieldwork in the Summer of 2015, I lived with a Moroccan family who had generously invited me into their home and integrated me into their daily rhythms and routines. The day of my arrival, I accompanied the family to visit two relatives who had just returned from an *ʿumra* trip and several others who had performed the Hajj in the past few years. They were all unstintingly generous with their time and allowing me into their discussions. In the neighborhood, I was also welcomed by shopkeepers who accepted me as the guest of the respected *ḥājj* and *ḥājja* with whom I lived.[59]

My host, or *khāltī* as I called her, took me under her wing and provided me with motherly care, introduced me to her network, invited me to join women's gatherings, and family occasions.[60] It is worth noting here that in this thesis, I refer to my contacts in Morocco depending on how well I knew them. I refer to those I met once or twice for interviews, for example, as interlocutors and those I knew for longer period as friends, although the twocategories of 'friend' and 'interlocutor' can overlap within the context of this thesis (cf. Berger 2018; Driessen 1998).[61]

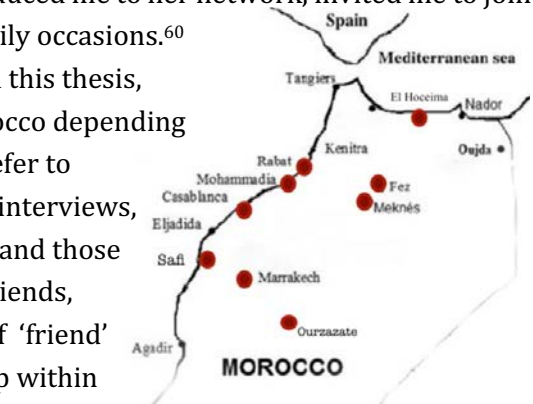

Figure 6: Overview of parts of Morocco where fieldwork was conducted

[59] The definite article 'al-' in the Arabic language, whose function is to render the noun on which it is prefixed definite, is sometimes omitted in transliteration (from the words al-*ḥājj/al-ḥājj)* to keep with the Arabic grammar rules.

[60] The word *khāltī*, literally meaning 'my (maternal) aunt', in general is used for endearment and respect for older women with whom one develops a kind of relationship. Throughout the thesis, I refer to different people in the same way I addressed them during my fieldwork.

[61] There have been debates on what researchers call a 'friend' or an 'informant' in the field. Over time ethnographers have use terms like 'native', 'subject', 'local', 'respondent', 'collaborator', 'informant', 'interlocutor' and 'friend', among others, to describe the relationship between the fieldworker and the key

I also refer to people according to how I addressed them during my fieldwork, calling for example, older women *khāltī* (my maternal aunt) or *al-ḥājja* as sign of respect and older men as *ʿammī* (my paternal uncle) or *al-ḥājj*. Staying with a Moroccan family proved to be the best way to familiarize myself with Moroccan Arabic, *dārīja*, which differs considerably from Palestinian and Modern Standard Arabic. Through daily conversations mainly with my host family, shopkeepers, and taxi drivers, I managed to nearly perfect my dialect in a few weeks.

The question of my identity(ies), expectations, and roles

The issue of an (im)balance of power is not only related to the researcher's middle-class position as an academic [which in the eyes of many research participants would make them part of the elite] but also by other dimensions of one's identity (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Within field research, the way community members see researchers influences what we will be told, how we might interact with people and places, and, ultimately, the kind of data we gather in the field. Therefore, in considering the *how* of the fieldwork, the various experiences I encountered underscore the need to scrutinize questions of ethics and usefulness of methods to be used in the field. According to Anne-Meike Fechter:

> The personality of [the] fieldworker influences the way they are able to conduct their research, how the interlocutors are going to view them, and how the researchers might understand what is happening in the field... It is possible to become aware of these processes and trace their implications (Fechter 2003, 1)

Indeed, the ethnographer's state of being, including the emotions, reactions, and experiences that are consistently evoked within her, are

interlocutors (cf. Berger 2018; Prell 1989; Spradley 1979). Peter Berger finds that making friends in the field is a natural process caused by the situation in which ethnographers find themselves (Berger 2018). He also points out that the interlocutors themselves sometimes frame relationships in terms of kinship or friendship with the ethnographer (Ibid).

part of the ethnographic knowledge-making process (Davies and Spencer 2010, 1). The circumstances and experiences of fieldwork evoke multiple subjective emotions such as fear, anxiety, doubt and guilt. Fortunately, over the years, I have faced only minor challenges in establishing long term relationships of empathy with many of my research participants in Palestine, Chile, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. As I became closer to the people whose lives I was trying to understand, I had to remind myself of my own positionality and subjectivity. To go beyond my subjectivity, I was constantly trying to 'quarantine', metaphorically, my own impressions and participate in the daily lived experiences of the communities I studied, even if, at times, these experiences were different from the social systems and cultural practices with which I was familiar, such as local pilgrimages (see Chapter Eight).

Identity operates on a number of levels and embraces factors peculiar to the individual and also what might be called dominant external markers of identity, such as ethnicity or profession, the significance of which may vary according to the situation. For example, in contrast to my experience with mostly non-Muslim visitors to the refugee camp where I lived in Palestine, who focused on my Muslimness, in (majority Muslim) Morocco, I found that my Palestinian identity was a highly significant identifier, both for my interlocutors and for myself as researcher. My status as a Palestinian [a representative of an oppressed people that deserves aid and solidarity is the dominant discourse in Morocco about the plight of the Palestinian people], coupled with my position as a researcher at a European university [part of an elite and affiliated with former colonial powers who used ethnographic research in Morocco as an aid to control and surveillance] had different implications and impacts on those I met and with whom I worked.

People manifested abundant support for Palestine which reached beyond the sense of nationalistic belonging. I was often told: "In Morocco, Palestine is considered a national cause" and that Moroccans supported the struggle of the people of Palestine. People often referred to the Moroccan quarter of Jerusalem or *ḥārat al-maghāriba* which symbolizes the historic relationship of Moroccans to Palestine, a connection which

dates back to the twelfth century. Many Moroccans, for example, referred to the time of the Ayyubids, when Moroccans volunteered in the army of Saladin and subsequently were invited or permitted to remain in Jerusalem.[62] Other Moroccans referred to an ancient ritual they called *taqdīs* which refers to Jerusalem, al-Quds, as pilgrims used to visit Jerusalem either before or after their pilgrimage to Mecca so as to have visited the third most sacred mosque in Islam, after those in Mecca and Medina.[63] During my fieldwork, those I met often wanted to hear about Palestine through me, creating a natural and easy starting point to many conversations. Many Moroccans told me that they wished to visit Jerusalem and wanted my opinion on how to realize that ambition. Others, like a local governmental officer, stated that he would help me simply because I come from Palestine, which he described as a sacred place that was dear to his heart.

The significance of my Palestinian identity, then, became paramount in Morocco. When introducing me to others, Moroccans used my nationality as a Palestinian as the first identifier after my first name. People often responded to that with *miskīna*, the connotation of which is 'poor thing'; the word can be used to describe someone who is the epitome of misery. In Morocco, however, the expression is used colloquially to express sympathy and warm feelings for the other. Being the *miskīna* from Palestine allowed me to gain access to a larger number of contacts within the local community. Many Moroccans were also fascinated by the fact that I excelled in the local dialect; my dialectal accomplishments were seen very positively, and I was occasionally told that I had become a local *maghribiyya* (Moroccan) myself. This interesting combination of being distinctively Palestinian, yet linguistically in harmony with the local Moroccan culture enhanced my

[62] The Moroccan quarter was established in 1193 by Saladin's son al-Malik al-Afḍal Nurud-Dīn ʿAli, as a *waqf* (a charitable trust) and was dedicated to all Moroccan immigrants (Al-ʿUlaymī 1973; cf. Peters 2017, 357-9).
[63] Although this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis, I discuss it in a paper I plan to publish in the near future.

access to research opportunities as detailed further in the subsequent chapters, most specifically in Chapter Eight.[64]

Gender can shape the opportunities available to a researcher in Muslim or other cultural settings such as those of independence of movement and travel. In general, I had access – almost equally – to both men and women in the field. Yet, I was able to participate in gatherings of groups of women or family events where men and women were present and less in gatherings of men. When I travelled to participate in local events, for example to observe a local pilgrimage near the city of Safi, I was advised by several Moroccan friends not to travel alone to the site since the pilgrimage took place in a remote area. Therefore, two young men and one young woman offered to accompany me. As a group, it was easier to travel and at the site they helped me speak to many local pilgrims.

Similarly, in 2018, when I wished to partake in a pilgrimage near El Hoceima in the north of Morocco, I was also assisted by local people, some of whom I was meeting for the first time. The site was three hours away from the city in the mountains and unreachable without a car. A local teacher offered to accompany me together with two other men. I did not mind being the only woman in the group, although when I talked later to my family they were worried for my safety on such occasions. The three men who took me to the site were very helpful and had no further intentions than showing me the site; they thanked me for evincing the

[64] In September 2016, for example, I wanted to visit the coastal city of Safi to observe and document a local pilgrimage practice known as the 'Pilgrimage of the Poor'. This pilgrimage takes place one day a year on the day preceding *ʿīd l-kbīr* (Feast of Sacrifice). Being new to the city and having no contacts was problematic. I contacted several Moroccan friends until finally one offered to ask a distant female relative to assist me. Later in the evening he called me with good news. He explained that the woman had welcomed me to her house upon learning that I was Palestinian. Even though the feast is often seen as a family occasion, I was welcomed not only to visit the family before the feast but also to spend the days that follow in order to witness the preparations, rituals and local customs. To the woman I was a stranger but being Palestinian was my access point.

desire to visit a site which was very much part of their historical existence in the region.

Participant observation and multi-sited fieldwork

Studying the pilgrimage to Mecca as it features in the narratives and experiences in the everyday lives of Moroccans, as well as wishing to investigate the meanings produced around the Meccan pilgrimage in Moroccan micro-practices in broader socio-cultural dynamics, required a long term, qualitative field-based approach (cf. Marcus 1998). The principal method of data gathering during my fieldwork was participant observation. I closely observed local practices as I joined my interlocutors in their workplaces, markets, shops, living rooms and kitchens. On different occasions, my interlocutors showed an interest in my research findings and my own person. They frequently asked me, for instance, how I liked their country, their cultural practices and what differences I perceived between Morocco and my home country Palestine.

Participant observation is the most effective approach for ethnographic research as it allows a deep understanding of people's lives as individuals and at the same time, allows the observer to assess the interactions they have in their social world (cf. Marcus 1998; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Rabinow 1977). Participant observation provides access to the personal, the social and cultural aspects of life that might be needed for a rich empirical data collection and analysis of everyday life. Ethnographic research in anthropology and some sub-disciplines of sociology has historically been dominated by participant-observer approaches (Whyte 1984). Participant observation as a method reduces the power imbalance between researcher and researched that some other methods, such as interviews, for example, pose when collecting qualitative data as part of research. In participant observation, the observer is situated in the daily life of the people under study. Like Schielke (2015, 2012), Newcomb (2010), and Buitelaar (1993), I am interested in everyday discourses and practices surrounding the Muslim

community in Morocco which are best accessed by the quasi-democratic method of participant observation.

My conversations with Moroccans about the pilgrimage often took place spontaneously, in informal settings. On specific occasions, including meetings with local officials and imams, visiting returning pilgrims, and meeting people that I did not know previously, I organized and conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews. In total, I lived with ten families, conducted approximately fifty personal, detailed yet informal interviews with Moroccans who intended to go, or had been, on Hajj and, of course, had innumerable informal conversations with Moroccans I met at the market, train, taxi or even on the street. The families with whom I lived resided mainly in urban centers: I was first in Fes, then in Mohammedia, and, finally, in Casablanca. I also spent one month in the city of Safi and a few weeks visiting pilgrimage sites and interviewing pilgrims (*ḥujjāj*) in and near the cities of Ouezzane, El Hoceima, Meknes, Moulay Idriss Zerhoun, Marrakech, Ouarzazate, and El Jadida.

I used snowball sampling in the sense of recruiting interlocutors from within the same network whilst, at the same time, meeting some Moroccans from outside these networks. Multi-sited ethnographic research proved helpful for several practical and educational reasons. First, I was able to access different personal networks and social classes including upper-middle class, lower-middle-class, as well as less privileged communities. This provided me with a rich social spectrum for analysis.[65] I would meet a family of limited means one day and a wealthy businessman the next. I would stay in a comfortable bedroom one night and share a bed with a friend in her parents' small house in another. I

[65] According to a Moroccan government study from 2008, "the middle class is constituted of individuals whose consumption, expenditure, or income levels are in the middle range of the social distribution of those indicators" (quoted in Boufous and Khariss 2015, 3). In this thesis, I measured the middle class in two ways: by interlocutor's self-identification and by their income. Self-identification was based on people's family conditions and background, and income levels depended on the type of employment and education of household members. For discussion on class issues in Morocco see Bogaert (2018), Cohen (2004), Crawford Newcomb (2013), Newcomb (2017), and Sadiqi (2018; 2003).

would be invited to a luxurious restaurant for a fish meal one afternoon and on the following day would dine with a friend on a cheap sardine lunch. Always, however, even the poorest people showed enormous hospitality by offering me tea, lunch or dinner. Working in different sites also allowed me to meet a larger number of people who had been on Hajj than in a single-site study. Furthermore, being introduced to and becoming acquainted with different locations in Morocco enhanced my skills as a researcher by my immersion in a plethora of social contexts and milieus, making me more sensitive to cultural differences with each encounter.

Participant observation further meant that, quite by chance, I overheard whispered remarks, gossip, telephone conversations and other accidentally disclosed information when people were chatting with relatives abroad. I asked about the meaning of every new word I heard and new people whose names were mentioned in my presence. I tried to be alert at all times to assess the situation and decide when to ask, when to initiate a conversation or change the subject, and when to keep silent, observe and listen. The families with whom I lived soon saw how curious I was and eager to learn about their life and to gain new knowledge in general.

Combining a range of different methods including listening, observing, and tracing techniques when carrying out research over time, allowed me to test the data that I gathered and to modify my techniques when collecting further data. Long-term fieldwork also allows opportunities for discovering the 'unsaid' in the everyday life (cf. Dresch 2000). Not all communication is explicit or on the surface, but it is often conveyed through the interstices of spoken language (cf. Joseph 2018; Altorki and El-Solh 1988).

While I found a large number of pilgrims to meet and talk to in Fes where I spent my first three months of fieldwork, I had the desire to visit other places and test my findings in a larger setting. Therefore, I travelled to Mohammedia to visit a friend whom I had met a couple of years before at a conference in Jordan. This visit proved fruitful not only because I was able to access a new network of Moroccans, but in

Mohammedia I could easily travel between the city and the airport near Casablanca where I was able to witness the procedure of departure and return of pilgrims over the course of a few weeks during the Hajj season. Although I initially stayed with my friend and her family, I felt that it was time to live independently for a while for several reasons. First, I was living in the household of a busy working family whose members spent little time in the family setting. Second, unlike the small neighborhood where I lived in Fes, the neighborhood in Mohammedia where my friend lived had only very few shops and a restrictive family network which would not easily facilitate access to individuals beyond that family. Third and most significantly, I did not want to outstay my welcome. Therefore, I quickly took the opportunity to rent a small place in the city from which I could travel easily between neighborhoods of Mohammedia, Rabat and Casablanca, assisted by Mohammedia's strategic position between the two other cities.

When I left Morocco after my first research period, I stayed connected with many of my interlocutors mainly via social media networks. They provided me with updates about their personal lives and the situation in Morocco in general. They also constantly reminded that I was not a stranger and that I should return 'home' to Morocco to which I returned for seven months of my second period of fieldwork. I returned to Morocco in the summer of 2016, six weeks before the Hajj season, and it took me to Casablanca, where I experienced the hospitality of another friend whom I had met at a United Nations youth conference in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku. This friend was an enthusiastic engineer who invited me to live with her and another young woman in Morocco's economic capital. In Casablanca, I moved in with the two young women, who lived in a poorer neighborhood. This step gave me access to less privileged people. While I had stayed previously with middle class Moroccans, many of whom had a good level of education, this time my encounters were with many people who struggled to build sustainable lives and, for me, the class divide was very obvious.

My stay for the rest of 2016 was, again, varied. I visited Fes several times to renew my acquaintance with my initial host family and

many of the friends I had made the previous year, and to follow up my research among them. I also revisited many of my friends in Rabat and Mohammedia. I noted some state-initiated changes that had taken place in the time between the two periods of fieldwork, including additional security measures at Moroccan airports.[66] During this period of research, I witnessed people sending kisses to departing pilgrims through the glass doors of the airport (as they were not being allowed inside) and waving to their loved ones with tears and *duʿāʾ* prayers being made out loud. At the time of the pilgrims' return, I spent time in the area outside the airport building where families had gathered to welcome those returning; this was only done after March 2016. Despite restrictions imposed on airport access, I went to the airport 15 times to observe a pilgrim's farewell or welcome (averaging three flights of departing or returning pilgrims each time). Much of the data I acquired here was through open informal conversations or 'small talk' with people waiting for their loved ones to leave to Hajj or return from it.

During my fieldwork, my previous involvement in youth-work proved helpful in accessing greater networks in Morocco. The same Moroccan friend I met in Baku, for example, was able to help me contact people in the city of Safi where I made many friends. These included a host family with whom I spent the celebrations of *ʿīd l-kbīr,* before which I also witnessed the so-called Pilgrimage of the Poor, a local pilgrimage to which I dedicate a chapter of this thesis. In Safi I was also introduced to many local rituals related to the pilgrimage to Mecca and the Feast of Sacrifice. A male friend I had met in Alexandria introduced me to a female friend from the city of Ouezzane, an important Sufi center in Morocco where I was able to meet many people and accompany them in visits to

[66] In March 2016, three suicide bombings occurred in Belgium: two at Brussels Airport and one at Maalbeek metro station in central Brussels. Thirty-two civilians and three perpetrators were killed, and more than 300 people were injured. Although the attacks took place in a foreign country, they left a mark in Morocco where the government showed greater caution at the airport by not allowing anyone apart from those travelling on the same day or officially working at the airport from entering the premises of the airport (information provided through personal contact with local official)

various local shrines. I was also introduced to another friend in the city of Ouarzazate, which means 'door to the desert', known locally as the Hollywood of Morocco. This was where a cinematic reconstruction of the Kaʿba in Mecca was built in the desert for the famous film al-*Risāla*, a film which depicts the life of the prophet Muhammad (see page 409).[67] In Ouarzazate and the neighboring Aït Ben Haddou, I met many members of the Amazigh population of the region, an experience which introduced me to different cultural events that took place around the time of Hajj in the area.

Following my two major periods of fieldwork (July 2015 to April 2016 and June 2016 to January 2017), I travelled to Morocco for three more follow-up visits to catch up with friends and interlocutors, witness changes in the Hajj administrative procedures, and verify the data gathered in the previous research trips. The first of these shorter visits differed significantly from previous and subsequent ones: I visited a new site and had a new 'pilgrimage' experience. Fascinated by the Pilgrimage of the Poor and its practices which I witnessed near the city of Safi, I had decided to return to Morocco and gain more information about these kinds of local pilgrimages. Initially, I thought of returning to Safi to witness the local pilgrimage there for a second time. The pilgrimage itself traditionally takes place on a specific day of the year which made following it ethnographically challenging due to time constrains. A couple of weeks before the pilgrimage day, however, I met a young researcher from the city of El Hoceima who told me about a different pilgrimage site that I had heard about before but had not yet visited. With this new friend's help, I was able to visit the pilgrimage site and spend the feast of sacrifice with his family who proved to be most welcoming hosts. Even my friend's mother, the one member of family who did not speak Arabic but only the local Amazigh language of the region, made me feel very welcome with her smile, hand gestures, and delicious dishes.

[67] *Al-Risāla,* originally known as 'Mohammad, Messenger of God', is a 1976 historical drama directed and produced by Moustapha Akkad, chronicling the life and times of the prophet Muhammad (see the epilogue at the end of this thesis).

From the description above, it will be apparent that my research population was large enough to allow me a view of the pilgrimage in Morocco from several perspectives, embracing Moroccans of both genders, with higher and lower educational and class backgrounds. Within ethnographic research, a certain level of trust of the research population towards the researcher is required in order to gather valid information (cf. Perecman and Curran 2006). Although people knew that I was conducting research, in the process of spending time together for many months and becoming friends, I sometimes had the feeling that they had forgotten the main reason why I was with them and disclosed personal information to me as a friend which they probably would not have shared with an outsider. What seems to have happened is that the distinction or boundary between my role as researcher and my status as new friend became blurred, presenting me with practical and ethical concerns.

Conversely, it might also be the case that, when seen as a friend, on occasion I was not confided in as I might have been had I stayed a relative stranger, who, it is known, will leave again soon: I did in fact, from time to time, assume the latter role for some people. The role is both more non-committal and presents less of a fear of future regrets for sharing confidences should circumstances change. There is more of a guarantee that the disclosed information will not be passed on in one's own network. However, from a research perspective I faced a dilemma as a result of the trust placed in me. To resolve that dilemma, I have tried to conceal all identities by changing interlocutors' names and other details that might disclose their real identity. Also, even if it might have contributed to the argument of this thesis, in several instances I have chosen not to utilize information that I consider to be too personal.

When visiting and talking with my interlocutors, we would engage in different levels of conversations on a range of topics. On these occasions, I gained much interesting data incidentally on the life histories and other stories of such acquaintances. Life stories proved to be useful in analyzing the trajectories of the lives of my companions. As a methodological tool, the life history encompasses the past as part of the

construction of the present and its role in the development of identity. The stories of the past must be seen to reflect and contribute to life conditions of the present and not least to the anticipation of the future (cf. Bruner 1986).

Apart from the research opportunities such as those mentioned above, the main data was gathered through participant observation in the daily lives of pilgrims and their broader networks, including their activities in the domestic level at home, their shopping trips, Hajj classes, mosque visits, visits to relatives, wedding and engagement parties, and local festivals. During my fieldwork I joined the families with whom I lived as an extra family member. Family members allowed me to follow their activities intensively for a long period of time, having me over at family occasions, family dinners and road trips, and answering the kind of 'why,' 'how,' and 'what' questions that I often asked.

During my field research I also made use of local institutions involved in the Hajj process. I met on a regular basis with workers at local governmental offices, travel agents, and Hajj and *'umra* trip organizers. I also visited local bookstores and libraries to gain further knowledge on Moroccan culture and society. In addition, I contacted Moroccan artists, university students and researchers to discuss their Hajj related work or aspects of Moroccan culture, history and religious practices. I found these encounters to be highly valuable especially in broadening my perspective on Morocco and its people.

During my fieldwork, I also made use of media, including daily printed newspapers, Moroccan TV channels, and social media platforms. My intention was, first of all, to keep up with news items regarding the Hajj, and also to learn about local politics and the representation of Islam in the local press. Secondly, media was a popular aspect of the everyday lives of Moroccans. Therefore, I joined my friends and their families in watching popular dramas and TV shows and often listened to the radio, especially when I accompanied older Moroccans, or in taxis where drivers frequently listened to religious programs (mainly through the Mohammed VI Qur'an channel). Furthermore, I followed my Moroccan friends and their activities by using social media, like Facebook, where

they shared their daily news, images during the Hajj, and news related to Hajj and *ʿumra*. At the time of the pilgrimage, several Facebook groups were created to follow up on the Hajj process and the latest news of pilgrims. I found those pages highly valuable in updating the news of the pilgrimage to Mecca and also after my fieldwork period to keep in contact with my Moroccan friends and news of Morocco.

Data were also gathered from literature, song lyrics, and stories, all of which I translated from Arabic to English. For the recording of the participatory activities, I made use of field notes, and (if permission was given by my interlocutors) photography, sound recordings and films. I made written notes during or after the interviews and then translated them and typed them up – in English – as soon as possible.

Note taking was, however, for obvious reasons, restricted outside interview settings where I used a small notebook in which I penned information in as much detail as possible. At other gatherings, I used the Notes App on my phone where I typed in key information and stored every new phrase almost immediately which was not distracting since I often witnessed people using their phones in these gatherings for various reasons. When traveling by the train, I had time to record my observations and recollections of people's conversations as accurately as possible. At night and often in the early mornings, I would write up my hand-written and phone-typed notes as quickly as possible on my laptop so that I had an electronic record of my notes. Although this was time consuming and sometimes exhausting, it has proved most helpful in the process of writing this thesis. When typing out my notes, I included detailed descriptions of the observations and interviews including the context, the atmosphere, the main empirical points and made sure that I kept all my interlocutors anonymous, changing their names and personal details to protect their privacy.

When I started my fieldwork, I transcribed my notes directly into English even though the conversations where in Moroccan Arabic. Being a native speaker of another Arabic dialect allowed both for easy recognition and rapid learning of the new dialect, and made me particularly sensitive to nuanced differences in both dialects, thus almost

automatically drawing my attention and keeping me alert to what my interlocutors said and meant as precisely as I could, rather than listening to them unthinkingly. However, I also faced a translation dilemma. Although my translation conveyed the meaning of what was being said, it did not always reflect the depth of meaning of my understanding of my interlocutors' words. No two languages hold a precise equivalence for one another's idiomatic expressions and my decisions with regards to translation have had consequences for how my research has been produced.

In the analysis and interpretation of my empirical data, I have tried to stay close to the words and expressions used by the people whom I encountered in Morocco. Therefore, I used the approach of qualitative data collection and analysis based on grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I have worked with both deductive and inductive codes. During and in between the fieldwork periods, I tried to code and structure the data and adjust my questions according to my findings and observations.

Although qualitative research does not allow one to generalize for a larger population, it does, however, provide rich, contextualized understanding of the theme of this research and it facilitates reflection on relations and patterns on a meta-level (cf. Rabinow 1977). I want to emphasize, nonetheless, that the statements I make in this thesis regarding my topic only apply to my specific research settings and the respondents with whom I have spoken. Because of the abundance of observations, I selected cases that most strongly illustrate the arguments developed in this study and lend themselves for 'thick description' (cf. Geertz 1973).

One point I would like to emphasize as I conclude this section is the following: while making use of ethnographic fieldwork was the best method to approach my research questions, like any other study, this thesis can only offer a mere glimpse into the lives of people and of their religious understandings, both of which are more complicated than the area I have been able to analyze. I am, however, convinced that the process of observing and participating in the everyday lives of Moroccans

has enriched my understanding of the meanings of pilgrimage to Mecca for the people whose lives I was trying to understand to a far greater extent than any other method would have allowed. Concurrently, through my analysis, I also hope to enrich the understanding of lived religion, with its complexities and nuances, within the everyday world of a group of Muslims.

Visiting Mecca

Although my fieldwork concerned the embeddedness of the pilgrimage to Mecca in Morocco, listening to the stories, narratives and experiences of Moroccan pilgrims inspired me to join a group of pilgrims on a lesser pilgrimage trip, *ʿumra*, to experience the atmosphere of Mecca myself. The first time I did so was in 2016. Being a young woman, however, meant that I needed a male guardian on the trip, a *maḥram*.[68] Under Saudi Arabia's male guardianship system, every woman applying for a visa must have a male guardian – a father, brother, husband, or even a son – to accompany her during the visit. This '*maḥram*' provision is only relaxed for women over 45 years of age, travelling in organized groups. Prior to my PhD studies, I had travelled – for research and study – to more than 15 countries in five continents, sometimes as part of a group but mostly alone. I have stood in front of thousands of people to speak about Palestine, refugees and women. Yet, when I decided to visit 'the House of God' I could not travel alone. Therefore, I returned from Morocco to Palestine during my first fieldwork period and asked my father, aged 80, to accompany me on a journey to Mecca. Since my father does not travel without my mother, I had to be accompanied by both of my parents on this trip. These regulations affected my sense of agency as a female researcher and my ability to travel individually and simultaneously as a practicing Muslim.

Although I was restricted by having to look after my parents during the trip, being accompanied during the journey allowed me to

[68]For further elaboration and implications of the Saudi regulations on the matter, see Chapter Two.

reflect on the challenges Moroccan women experience during Hajj (see Chapter Seven). My mother's encounters with other pilgrims were specifically helpful; she is a very sociable woman who talked to pilgrims from various backgrounds, a fact which allowed me greater access to women, especially at the Grand Mosque of Mecca. During our two-week-journey to Mecca, we joined not only Moroccan pilgrims, but pilgrims from all around the world. I witnessed the interactions between Moroccans and other pilgrims, their conversations, shopping trips, and prayers.

The trip was revealing in relation to the larger subject of this thesis, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and also to the attraction of Moroccans to holy sites in general and to those in and around Mecca and Medina in particular. About two years later, in February 2018, I made a second trip to Mecca to follow another group of Moroccan pilgrims on their sacred journey. My two trips to Mecca gave me the opportunity to reflect on the narratives of Moroccan pilgrims more deeply, especially in relation to the feelings and sensory experiences of pilgrims, in addition to exploring, with a particular emphasis, women's narratives and struggles during the pilgrimage.

Figure 7: Selfie with my mother (middle) and sister (right) in front of the Kaʿba during my second *ʿumra* trip/ fieldwork (Mecca, 06/02/2018)

Writing and analysis

In the end, my corpus of field notes contained the narratives of over one hundred people in over five hundred pages. What followed next was a process of thinking, sketching, designing, discarding, reading and rereading, arranging, interpreting, oscillating between field notes, interviews, analysis, literature searching, writing and deleting, first, then second and third versions, details of which I will spare the reader.

Writing a PhD thesis is not an easy task. Once the process of analysis moves towards the period of writing up, the real challenges of such copious amounts of highly complex and nuanced research data come to the fore. After a long period of collecting and accumulating, now is time for selection, condensation and analysis. Out of myriad possible observations and stories of field research, only a few can be told, shaping the final product. I experienced the inner struggle of most anthropologists and other qualitative researchers. Before concluding this thesis, I will provide the reader with a glimpse into some of the stories left untold mainly because they either do not fall directly into the main focus of this thesis or because they need further investigation.

Identity within the research process and fieldwork

Khāltī Fatima was one of the first people I got to know in Morocco. Like many who came after her, our conversations included not only talking about the pilgrimage to Mecca and her everyday life but also about other aspects of life in Morocco. She also wanted to know more about my life and asked me about my research plans. Towards the end of my research period, she remarked: "You can say now that you have many families in Morocco! You are a Moroccan now!" I was touched by her remark, both because I agreed that it was a great privilege to be allowed into the lives of the people with whom I lived and whom I befriended in the course of my research, but also because her words were sincere and being granted a symbolic admission to the family is very a privileged position. I returned to Fatima's house every time I felt I needed a break, although such a visit was still the opportunity for fieldwork. As is the case with any

family, however, this relationship is not completely without tensions. A Family can represent warmth and support as well as entanglement and expectations, matters on which I reflect below.

Ambiguities of position: tensions between integration into family structures and researcher detachment / independence

Living in a local family meant that I was given preferential access to the public and private spheres of the people whose lives I was trying to understand. It also meant dealing with social groups and family demands. I accompanied the family to wedding parties, women's gatherings, and family events where I was introduced as a friend, or even simply as a family member. Such occasions offered me a certain degree of anonymity within these broader social settings. However, those with whom I lived still felt great responsibility for me, including for my safety within socially and politically problematic situations. Mostly this took the form of insisting that I should be accompanied by a friend or a family member when traveling long distances or going to unfamiliar places.

Being temporarily quasi-adopted by the family meant, on the one hand, that I was invited to family gatherings, allowing me to participate in local events with the family, and, on the other hand, to witness intimate conversations. Living with the family gave me rapid and unhindered access to the local community, offering me powerful linguistic passports to interactions. In Fes, for example, my host mother accompanied me around the neighborhood, introduced me to the shopkeepers on the street, and talked about me to neighbors. On Fridays, I was asked to carry several plates of the traditional dish, couscous, which was made by my host mother in huge quantities, to the local café, the bank, and the tailor's shop. This practice of gift-giving allowed me to interact with the local community and connect further to local traditions. These interactions allowed enjoyable conversations and discussions. In short, the family structure itself was a crucial integral element within my fieldwork; in addition, at a personal level, I enjoyed the company of family members and appreciated their care for my safety.

Becoming a temporary family member was rewarding, yet also came with restrictions. One example of this paradoxical experience is when I wished to visit a pilgrimage site near the city of El Hoceima. During the period of my field research, protests over economic and social problems in the region escalated to a mass protest movement known as *ḥirāk al-Rīf.*[69] Worried for their safety and mine, none of my friends in Fes, Casablanca, or Mohammedia agreed to accompany me on a trip to the troubled region. I was further advised not to risk my safety by visiting El Hoceima alone. At the time, I listened to my friends and waited until I had successfully made connections with local inhabitants of El Hoceima. Then, I was able to visit the city and observe the pilgrimage. Once there, I also lived with a local family. I was often warned, nonetheless, that I was being watched, this time not by the family or the locals, but by the secret police. I did not feel specifically threatened because I was accompanied by local people and did not think my existence in the city was problematic. However, it struck me as ironic, my being warned to be careful of police, when I came from a country where I saw the army daily either in the camp or at the checkpoints, have been shot twice, firstly as a child and secondly while covering a demonstration in Hebron as a journalist, and, have had my family house in the camp invaded numerous times by the Israeli army. However, this experience of being regarded protectively by my interlocutors made me reflect on other kinds of injustice and dangers to the public in both Morocco and Palestine.

[69] The protests in the Rif started following the death of Mouhcine Fikri, a fish-vendor from El Hoceima, whose 500kg of swordfish was confiscated by a policeman on October 28, 2016. When Fikri climbed into the back of a rubbish truck to protest the confiscation and retrieve his fish, the rubbish crusher mechanism was activated, crushing him to death. Video footage of his death was widely played on social media in Morocco and the protests which started in El Hoceima spread across Morocco. Since Mouhcine Fikri's tragic death, the Rif area has been a site for successive escalations and protestors (which were called *ḥirāk al-rīf* or the Rif Movement) seeking justice for the fish-vendor's family and denouncing the marginalization and exclusion that the area has undergone for years. The El Hoceima demonstrations, along with protests in the mining town of Jerada in early 2018, marked the biggest protests in Morocco since the Arab Spring protests in 2011. After the Rif protests, some 150 activists related to the *ḥirāk* were arrested and sentenced to up to 20 years in jail (cf. Wolf 2019).

Researcher status and identity as a fellow Muslim

While in many senses I am myself not a member of the community whose daily lives I was studying, and therefore in those respects an outsider, being Arab and, more importantly, Muslim, contributed to my being perceived partly as an insider (cf. Sherif 2001, 436-47). As such, I could participate for example in *ʿumra* in a way that a non-Muslim could not and I could accompany Moroccans into mosques. Being allowed into Moroccan mosques meant that I could participate in Hajj lessons, observe Friday sermons, and was able to meet many new people. I realize this is a privilege that non-Muslim fellow researchers are denied, as – apart from Hassan II mosque in Casablanca – mosques are denied to non-Muslims in Morocco. [70] Although not all Palestinians are Muslim, many Moroccans assumed that being Palestinian necessarily entailed being a Muslim, something that covering my hair could be seen to confirm.

Besides all the different ways in which I was contextually positioned as an insider, an outsider, or both, I was also an outsider in the simple sense that I was not part of the personal social networks of my interlocutors. On the positive side, this meant that they did not have to fear that information given to me would be passed on to people they knew (at least insofar as they could trust me to present their stories anonymously in my publications).

Identification as interested researcher

As a researcher being based at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, I was aware of my privileged position, having more means and time at my disposal during fieldwork than many of my interlocutors. Living expenses in Morocco are far lower than those in Palestine and even much more so than in any European country where I have ever lived, including the Netherlands. However, when I accompanied my friends during visits to their towns, not wanting to display the fact that I had

[70] Only very few Moroccan mosques are open to non-Muslims such as the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca which non-Muslims can visit with a guided tour, during specific hours outside of prayer times.

more money at my disposal, I always patiently followed my interlocutors' way of travelling.

I also recognized the privilege I enjoyed of being able to afford to travel between cities for research and sometimes sightseeing. On several occasions Moroccan friends asked me about my travels. Quite a few of them stressed that I had seen more of 'their' country than they had themselves. Sometimes I took a friend or two along when I went to remote places, as I was advised by several of my host families, but also partially to allay an inner feeling of guilt regarding my privilege.

The issue of interests and credentials raises the question of how much a researcher should 'disclose' of their personal views during research. Although I liked the Moroccans with whom I lived and felt grateful for people's hospitality, I often saw and heard things that I did not feel comfortable with, including comments about other Moroccans who belonged to other classes or ethnic groups. I have also lived with, and seen, people living in extreme poverty and visited places where people lacked basic necessities for survival and a dignified living. During my fieldwork, there was considerable political unrest in places I visited, including youth activism over the lack of educational opportunities, healthcare concerns, and unemployment, some of which meant that a stance of complete neutrality was impossible. Thus, while I kept my particular political opinions to myself, at least in general settings, I made no secret of my disapproval of the marginalization of certain communities and especially my attitude to the inequality and poverty I witnessed in many places. My attitude was rooted in my position not only as a researcher but also as an individual who was, and still is, a member of an oppressed people, the Palestinians.

However, the issue here was how, as a researcher, I could reconcile having (strong) opinions and feelings about aspects of living conditions and socio-political systems encountered during my fieldwork on the one hand, and my stance as 'neutral researcher', a notion which in itself is frequently contested. In a sense, we are all the cultural and social products of our environment(s). In addition, we theorize and adopt political positions on life as we develop into fully conscious human

beings. Depending on where we find ourselves, our stance and attitudes may appear more or less marked when measured against a set of 'normative' values.

Within research ethics in anthropology, I think it has become clear that the concept of neutrality is very difficult to achieve in absolute terms (cf. Cohen 2000; Guillemin and Gillam 2004; Marshall 1992). For myself in practice, I continue to aspire to be academically sound and rigorous and to try to take a 'balanced' stand; however, I always respect and stand for human dignity as a guiding principle in both my life and my research.

In terms of daily practice as a researcher, I had to find a modus operandi to accommodate this nuanced position. Sometimes my friends would voice opinions with which I strongly agreed. In those situations, I resorted to my role as an empathic listener while silently reflecting on these opinions in mind. The opposite also occurred when I was in settings where people voiced views on certain matters that were far removed from my views or values: this sometimes resulted in feelings of unease on my side, but I tried to voice my opinion in the most subtle and respectful way, or kept silent while reflecting on it alone later.

My position as a researcher, claiming acceptance in Moroccan academic circles

During my fieldwork, the fact that I claimed professional status came into question, especially in conversations with professional men. One specific encounter was the subject of much reflection on my side. At the time I was participating in a conference in Casablanca and had numerous discussions with both Moroccan and international researchers. In a discussion on French philosophy, a male academic, also a teacher at a local university, complained about English translations of Michel Foucault. As a non-native speaker of both French and English, I mentioned that Foucault is challenging to read. His riposte was that if I found Foucault difficult to understand, my place "should be in the kitchen." I felt offended by the comment, firstly by his lack of appreciation of my honesty, but mostly because of the derogatory 'kitchen-comment'.

When I objected to his remark, he retracted it, denying that it was personal, but claiming it rather related to his comment regarding translations of Foucault. I took this to be a diversionary tactic, deflecting attention from a comment he knew to be sexist.

Regardless of his explanation of his words, an explanation which seems illogical, I was intrigued by his revealed attitude. Power dynamics obviously came into the situation. He had a position of multi-stranded authority: his status as teacher, his position as an academic leading a course, his local identity as a Moroccan and, crucially, as a man. He was also a speaker of the highly valued - at least by upper middle class - language of French, which, despite its being the colonial oppressors' language, in Morocco functions as 'symbolic capital' since it is related to being well-educated.[71] The nature of his riposte to me could be seen as demonstrating that he prioritized his status as a man, rather a conventional one, above all other aspects of his identity in that encounter. I am sure he instantly regretted what that remark revealed about him: my challenge forced him to reflect and retract. However, I doubted that he would have made a similarly dismissive comment if his response had been to a male researcher. Such encounters within a patriarchal structure profoundly conflicted with my understanding of my identity as an independent woman and, I must add, the restrictions on my mobility was part of my encounter with this patriarchal structure, resulting in inner tensions. I came to understand the dilemma faced by many independently minded women in modern day Arab society – arguably in most societies to some extent.

Gender expectations exist and are manifested in culturally mediated ways across the globe, some more obvious than others. The task of women working in any field is to challenge the boundaries, to keep

[71] Although Morocco has always included a wide variety of cultures and languages, French – in addition to Modern Standard Arabic – continues to be employed in professional and elite spheres, demonstrating a sophisticated education and considerable privilege creating a language hierarchy in part due to lingering colonial influences (Sadiqi 1995; cf. Alalou 2009; Aitsiselmi and Marley 2008; Rashidi 2000; Sadiqi 2003; Simpson 2008).

their eyes on the prize of their work and to negotiate gender-based obstacles. In anthropology, those obstacles can become part of the very fabric of the field of study. The task then is to maintain a degree of professional detachment when faced with situations that rub against the grain of personal convictions.

As ethnographers, we understand that we should be highly sociable, interested, questioning, and enthusiastic. As language students, we should be constantly chatting, practicing, improving our understanding of the nuances of language. And as gendered bodies we try to adapt to local norms, even those that conflict with our understandings of ourselves as powerful, independent, and equal. My constant battle with these three elements of my being as an ethnographer sometimes put me in difficult and potentially dangerous situations. Our status as outsiders, long-term residents and 'interested' people can make it very difficult to negotiate the boundary of respectability and professionalism. We are also human, and we have emotional needs; we want to make friends and establish family-like relationships in the field. Trying to strike a balance between being the detached researcher and feeling personally affected was largely a positive and successful enterprise. However, in my transactions with men in such public spaces, I became aware that some mistakenly perceived me as having given them a sexual invitation, despite my very best efforts to avoid any such messaging, and some felt permitted to behave aggressively towards me.

As a student within a Western academic tradition in the social sciences, I absorbed the ethics of fieldwork through research methodology courses. During the design of my project proposals, I understood that I must submit to an institutional ethics review board for approval before commencing fieldwork, as is the case with all students. Ethics approval requires that researchers consider the steps they will take to protect research participants and avoid causing them undue harm as well as insuring the researcher's own personal safety. Yet, while procedural guidelines are essential for protecting research subjects during the interview setting and in the subsequent write-up, they are less than clear when it comes to assisting researchers in grappling with all

"ethically important moments" in the field (Guillemin and Gillam 2004, 262). Furthermore, it has long been argued that it is impossible for the anthropologist always to remain impartial in relation to the politics and ethics of conducting participant research (cf. Armbruster and Laerke 2008; Guillemin and Gillam 2004). During fieldwork, I often had to alternately follow, read between, or even cross the lines imposed upon me by local regulations or gender restrictions. However, acknowledging this does not mean that I underestimate the importance of the people among whom I lived and worked and their role in facilitating or otherwise affecting my research in different ways.

Other questions such as how well informed, how politically aware and how sensitive the researcher is, to the research topic in question and to the local context, remain important as means of conducting fieldwork research in addition to gender identity and nationality. Furthermore, what I learned from the interplay between my multiple identities, and the perception by others of aspects of my identity, especially as a woman and a Palestinian, is the gap which exists between perceived positionality and its impact on the question of being insider or outsider in the field. Most ethnographers, even those doing research "among their own people" are always relative outsiders to the specific situation they are studying (cf. Narayan 1993, 671-686). Whether insider or outsider, positionality was a vitally important aspect of my research in understanding the conditions of social reality of different contexts.

Inasmuch as the field researcher's subjective experience continues to shape ethnographic knowledge, however, I hope that I have been able to reflect on, and to discuss, some aspects of the way in which the field makes its imprint on the researcher and, in turn, how the researcher's identity impacts the data gathered, as well as the ethical, political and cognitive registers of fieldwork.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the central concepts that will be addressed throughout this thesis, particularly as inspired by pilgrimage studies. I highlighted some of the ways in which this study of Hajj in the everyday life of Moroccans contributes to ongoing debates in anthropology concerning how Islam as a macro-level discursive tradition is lived through the habitual micro-level practices of everyday life. I started by outlining some of the most influential studies on pilgrimage (such as liminality or Turner's idea of *communitas*), as well as those demanding more attention to the ethnographic realities of pilgrims (such as Eade and Sallnow and Coleman and Elsner). As my thesis follows Coleman and Eade in not (exclusively) studying the pilgrimage itself, but rather its significance in the daily lives of the pilgrims, I also presented scholarship on the lived experiences of Muslims (such was the case in the work of Schielke). As the following chapters will show, my research supports Schielke's observation that everyday life is inherently and intrinsically in flux - complex, messy, ambivalent. I argue – in this thesis – that people can still aim at developing a pious self even if not through such strictly religious 'disciplining' and orthodox discourse as described by Mahmood, but rather developing a 'believing' and ethical attitude whilst being engaged in everyday activities.

In addition to this conceptual framework, this chapter contained the narrative of my own methodological trajectory. I detailed some of the terminology used (e.g. friend vs interlocutor), as well as the methodology (participant observation, in different places, and with varying degrees of familiarity with my interlocutors). I provided reflections on my own positionality as a researcher, and how my various identities (female, Muslim, Palestinian, researcher, etc.) impacted my reception by, and interactions with, various Moroccans. I discussed ethical issues, and also the analytical process: how my research was shaped by the data I gathered along the way, as well as the sifting of material for the final write-up.

Based on this fieldwork, I argue that, for Muslim pilgrims in Morocco, there is a continuous struggle to tackle the complexities of

everyday social and religious existence. Not everybody has a similar understanding of religious teachings. Pilgrims are influenced in their readings of the significance of religion in general and of the Hajj in particular by multiple personal markers of identity, such as their gender, age, social, political and educational backgrounds, all of which can overlap and interact. Thus, these various categories of identification intersect to establish a person's position in society and his or her ability to perform the Hajj. In addition to these personal factors, we all live in a culturally conditioned environment. I argue that the expression of pilgrimage experiences through cultural products, such as songs and narratives, interact with an individual's experience of the Hajj, to intensify, replicate and recreate the experience of being a pilgrim. Of course, those cultural acts affect fellow citizens who may not yet have performed Hajj, but who imbibe the narratives of those who manage to go on pilgrimage. Everyday life is complex and full of ambiguities and nowhere is this more apparent than in the influence of pilgrimage on a society such as that in Morocco.

Following the suggestion of Coleman and Eade not to focus on the pilgrimage site as such but on the movement of people, ideas, and other elements as a bridge to studying pilgrimage, and Schielke's focus on the study of everyday life, I will – in the following chapters – discuss how the pilgrimage to Mecca is featured as part of the lived religion of Moroccans, by tracing, recording and analyzing their everyday life. My privileged position as the writer of this thesis gave me the confidence to offer my interpretations of my interlocutors' words and I hope that I have been able to do this in a manner that does them justice.

PART ONE

The Pilgrimage to Mecca:

A Tripartite Process of Preparation, Pilgrimage and Aftermath

Continuity of imagery: the linguistic search for the essence of Hajj

From the twelfth century to today, Moroccan pilgrims, travelers and writers have sought to capture the elusive power and life-changing impact of Hajj. Their words indicate the intense search for meaning in Hajj and the sense of the pilgrimage being an apex of experience, after which the pilgrim's life is transformed forever.

I. Ibn Battuta (October 1326 EC): "Like a bride who is displayed upon the bridal-chair of majesty, and walks with proud steps in the mantles of beauty... We made around it the seven-fold circuit of arrival and kissed the holy Stone; we performed a prayer of two bowings at *maqām Ibrāhīm* [a shrine which houses the footprints of Abraham] and clung to the curtains of the Kaʿba... where prayer is answered..." (In Gibb 1929, 188).

II. Al-Qaysī (Ibn Mlīḥ) (June 1632):
"The Kaʿba appeared... saying to us:
'Come to me, Oh lovers of my beauty
This time cannot be overcome;
Where would you find a beauty like mine
There is no other to love in the universe;
Those who have seen [the Kaʿba] find happiness
Those who have not [seen it] find sorrow!'"
(My translation from Arabic: Al-Qaysī 1968).

III. Abdellah Hammoudi (Hajj season 1999): "The Hajj took us back to our will to exist beyond the worlds we ascribed to ourselves, in our differences – race, class, nation, gender – called us to bring forth our pasts and the pasts we had to summon in the form of something to come. Its story –or rather, its stories, since there were several – took hold of our lives. They made us retell the Qurʾanic narratives that retraced our past and anticipated its conclusions" (Hammoudi 2006, 284).

IV. Hassan Aourid (Hajj season 2007): "…I completed the Hajj... Being at the Kaʿba was a meeting; an encounter with my inner self…. Does all this have a meaning? Suddenly I stopped, saying, yes… Is life not an answer to God's call? Only to Him... In every place, in every time…" (My translation from Arabic: Aourid 2019, 90).

CHAPTER TWO

Before Departure: Motivations for Hajj Performance and the Creation of a Muslim Moral *Habitus*

O God,
how I long to complete my wish
On Mount Arafat;
O my Lord how I wish
To visit the chosen Prophet…
(Lyrics of Moroccan song)

Introduction

It was around 3:00 PM when I arrived at a dentist's clinic in a crowded neighborhood of Casablanca. Hajar, a Moroccan friend whom I had met a few weeks earlier, told me that her dentist had been on Hajj and had just returned. My visit, therefore, was to meet him and learn about his journey.

As I entered the clinic, I noticed that the waiting area was full of women and children waiting to be seen by the doctor. At the reception, I was welcomed by a man, probably in his seventies, who sat behind a wooden counter. He smiled generously as he welcomed me in. He was wearing a yellow jellaba and had a red cap on his platinum white hair. Earlier when I called to make an appointment by phone, I had been answered by a female secretary. I explained this to the man, who told me that the secretary had had to leave, so that he had taken her place, as he was the father of the dentist. From behind his chair, he pulled a grey plastic side table, placed it in front of the counter and invited me to sit and chat to him. When I asked the father, al-ḥājj Jamal was his name, about his son's pilgrimage, I learned that he, the father, his wife and their son, the doctor, had been on Hajj together. Our conversation was private although I could not tell if the women in the waiting room could overhear our dialogue. When I asked about his experience, he shared his thoughts:

> God, the Almighty, commanded prophet Abraham in Sūrat al-Hajj: 'And proclaim unto mankind the pilgrimage' [72]... A whole chapter [in the Qur'an] is specially named after this sacred duty... Ever since this proclamation, the hearts and minds of Muslims have been longing for that House of God, and crowds of visitors come to it from every distant place in response to the call of God… However, a person can perform the Hajj only when they hear that proclamation…

According to *al-ḥājj* Jamal, no one can go to Mecca, or perform the pilgrimage, unless they hear God's proclamation, the *nidāʾ*. "When you hear the call, the *ādhān*, you should go to Mecca and perform the pilgrimage," *al-ḥājj* Jamal pointed to his ear as he said these words, indicating the sense of hearing.

At that point, a young woman carrying a child entered the clinic. The woman greeted the man: "Blessed is your safe return, *al-ḥājj*! how was your Hajj?" *Al-ḥājj* Jamal thanked her politely, and answered: "Thank God; all went well..."

As he registered the woman's name at the bottom of the list of patients, she commented: "May God never prevent anyone from [accessing] these holy places…" She then added: *Allāh yaʿṭīnā al-ḥajj* [May God grant us all the Hajj]" to which *al-ḥājj* Jamal replied: "Amen!" After writing the woman's name in a large notebook in front of him, he asked her to sit in the waiting area.

When we talked more, I learned about the application process, that, like all Moroccans, *al-ḥājj* Jamal had had to go through. He said:

> Originally it was four of us; my wife, my son, son's wife and I… We applied twice for Hajj before we were finally selected… We were accepted last year and went to Hajj this year [as is the procedure in Morocco].[73] We prepared our papers; had

[72] The full verse from Qur'an reads as "Proclaim the Pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you on foot and on every kind of swift mount, emerging from every deep mountain pass" (Qur'an 22, 27). According to Ibn Kathīr, Abraham said to God: "But my voice cannot reach all peoples." God responded: "You make the call, and We will deliver the invitation to all" (Ibn Kathīr 1986 vol.3, 216-217).

[73] Square brackets are used to mark where I added words for clarification which were not included in the original quotation or text.

> medical tests done and paid for our trip; then prepared for the trip… Before leaving [Morocco], we said farewell to family and friends; and finally went on Hajj … The process took around one year…

The period between *al-ḥājj* Jamal's Hajj application and the time of the family's departure was a busy one, filled with both religious and mundane practices. Even if a person was fully prepared, however, according to *al-ḥājj* Jamal, he (or she) would only depart on the Hajj journey if God had made a proclamation and destined him (or her) to visit the holy places. [74]

The Meccan pilgrimage is considered the world's largest human gathering with almost 2.4 million people performing the pilgrimage in 2018, as shown in the table below. In Morocco, as in other Muslim-majority nations and communities, Muslims perform a number of national and family rituals before they are able to perform the Hajj. In this chapter, I will discuss the necessary preliminaries to Hajj, both religious and mundane. In the process, I show how the religious imperative to perform this pilgrimage is interwoven with material considerations and concerns. These do not necessarily detract from the spiritual aspects of preparation but are natural and inevitable considerations undertaken to maximize the second phase – the experience of pilgrimage itself. I also illustrate the reservoir of spiritual consolation on which people draw should they fail to undertake the Hajj and also, I consider the lengths to which some are prepared to go to make their dream of Hajj a reality.

Pilgrimage starts with the application process, followed by a selection procedure referred to in Morocco as the *qurʿa* (national lottery), and then the registration procedures, all of which are carefully managed by the state. In addition, once selected to perform the Hajj, Moroccans have to prepare themselves both financially and socially, involving family, friends and relatives. These ritualized contexts become the locus of negotiation between mundane and religious commitments.

[74] Fieldnotes, 22/10/2015.

Table 1: Annual number of Hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia from 2015 to 2019

Year	Number of pilgrims	Number of Moroccan pilgrims
2015	1,952,817	25,600
2016	1,862,909	25,600
2017	2,352,122	32,000
2018	2,371,675	32,000
2019	2,489,406	32,000

The period before a person can travel to Mecca, perform the pilgrimage or be addressed as *al-ḥājj*/*al-ḥājja*, is a lengthy period. In her discussion of preparing for the Hajj in Tunisia, Katia Boissevain (2012) describes this period as one containing both administrative procedures and religious rituals. Taking Boissevain's descriptive analysis one step further, I will show how the religious aspect of the application process, such as the 'hearing of God's proclamation' is intimately and inseparably entwined with mundane aspects, such as the administrative parts of the application process.

Indeed, from the time a pilgrim formulates the intention to perform the pilgrimage, through the application and selection process, and on to the departure from Morocco to Mecca, both the pilgrim and the sate involve in a series of activities that include a pilgrims' social network and the larger community (cf. Hammoudi 2006). Therefore, this chapter demonstrates that the material preparation for this ritual represents an important aspect of the pilgrimage; this phase of pilgrimage reveals to the outside observer both its groundedness in Moroccan society, as well as the personal importance of the pilgrimage in the everyday lives of Moroccans. I argue that although some aspects of the preparation for Hajj might seem mundane for some people, they are still vitally important in ensuring that the Hajj, as a religious duty, is performed well.

The chapter is organized as follows: it starts with a description of the *qurʿa* and its significance in Morocco, accounting for both the administrative and the religious aspects of the process. This is followed by a discussion of the reflections of Moroccans on the administrative

process and the means used to avoid the *qurʿa* including possible alternatives to this approved method; these alternatives include some which are bordering on the illicit. Finally, I reflect on the importance of both religious and mundane preparedness before undertaking the pilgrimage, which is for many Moroccans the journey of a lifetime.

Between the quota and the qurʿa: managing desires and hurdles

My conversation with *al-ḥājj* Jamal revealed the lengthy process through which each Moroccan wishing to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca has to go. Initially, prospective pilgrims have to visit local governmental offices where they can complete a registration form. Applicants should carry with them their national identification cards so that their name and number are registered in the electronic system. An applicant must not have completed the Hajj within the preceding ten years and women must have a male companion registered with them at the same time. Once the details of applicants are entered into the system, they need to wait for the national draw, the *qurʿa,* which takes place some weeks following the end of the registration process.

The *qurʿa* was initiated as a mechanism to deal with the ever-growing number of Moroccan Hajj applicants, whose number far exceeds the Hajj quota allocated for Moroccan pilgrims. The quota system was initiated by Saudi Arabia in 1987, as a result of the country's being overwhelmed by the growing numbers of pilgrims and due to fears of losing control over the pilgrimage.[75] In 1988, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) decided to set a Hajj quota for each country at 1,000 pilgrims per million of the total (Muslim) population (Bianchi 2004, 51).[76] As the current Hajj quota system allows each Muslim country to

[75] Following a major clash with Iranian pilgrims in 1987, the Saudi government feared attempts to politicize the pilgrimage (cf. Fischer and Abedi 1990).

[76] The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (formerly known as the Organization of the Islamic Conference) was established in 1969 and is made up of 57 member states (cf. Peterson 2003).

send one pilgrim per 1,000 inhabitants, Morocco has a total allocation of some 32,000 pilgrims per year.[77]

In Morocco, the application and the *qurʿa* of the Hajj take place one year before the performance of the Hajj.[78] This means that those who performed the Hajj in 2015, were successful in the *qurʿa* of 2014. According to the Moroccan regulations, the eldest fifteen percent of all applicants automatically qualify for the pilgrimage without having to go through the process of the *qurʿa*. This is organized by each municipality (*ʿamāla*) individually and so *qurʿa* takes place in a public venue, normally a large hall that can accommodate the many applicants who wish to witness the procedure. During the *qurʿa,* envelopes with the names of applicants are drawn from a large box, and the names in the envelopes are announced aloud. Although these moments are ones of anticipation and excitement for those whose names are called, they are also moments of disappointment for others.

Many people make sure to attend the draw, and *al-ḥājj* Jamal's son was no exception, according to his father:

> My son called me and said: 'Congratulations! We are going on Hajj!'… Then a friend who also attended the *qurʿa* called. He said: 'You are lucky! Congratulations! I heard that hundreds of people attended [the lottery]; yet only tens were selected…' Hajj is, indeed, so dear to the hearts of Moroccans…

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[77] During my fieldwork, rumors circulated in Morocco and elsewhere that the *ʿumra,* which can be undertaken at any time of year, might also be subjected to similar rules in future, at least during the times of greater influx like the month of Ramadan and the period of *al-mawlid al-nabawī*, the prophet Muhammad's birthday.

[78] Each Muslim country has the freedom to manage its quota. Some countries, like Indonesia, do not have a Hajj *qurʿa*. Indonesians wishing to perform the pilgrimage have to register their names in a government registration system and wait for their turn (Saudi Gazette 2016). According to a report from the Cabinet Secretary of the Republic of Indonesia, the length of the waiting time on average is around 20 years, depending on the province (2019). Other countries, like Jordan, use the *qurʿa* system and at the same time manage the numbers of applicants by age. For example, those who registered for Hajj in 2018 had to be born in, or before, 1970. The *qurʿa* in Jordan takes place in the same calendar year as the Hajj for which people are applying.

According to a local government officer, 264,522 Moroccans applied for the Hajj in 2014, compared to 27,000 people who were selected to perform Hajj from Morocco the following year (2015).[79] This means that only around ten percent of the applicants get selected to perform the Hajj (see Table 2 below). More than two hundred thousand Moroccans and their families were left disappointed, not being selected to perform the religious duty of Hajj. It is important to note that the total quota is larger than the number of visas allocated in the *qurʿa*, as the remaining thousands are reserved for governmental purposes. Some of those visas would be given to officials accompanying pilgrims as delegates of groups of religious scholars, governors, guides, doctors, nurses and other professionals. Visas are also given to officials like ambassadors and councilors or as royal favors as was the case in 2019 when the king of Morocco sent a delegation of twenty blind Moroccans on Hajj.[80] In addition, for several years in a row – before 2015 – the allocated quota was reduced by 20 percent due to the expansion project of the Grand Mosque of Mecca. As a point of interest, among the pilgrims I met during my fieldwork, the average number of attempts in the *qurʿa* before success came was four. Very few (around two out of a hundred) stated that they won the *qurʿa* upon their first registration. One Moroccan told me his sister had applied eight times for Hajj before being finally selected in the *qurʿa.* Table 2 below shows the numbers of those who registered for Hajj during the period of this research compared to the number of those who were selected.

[79] Unpublished information provided through personal connections with a local official.

[80] Several Moroccan news agencies covered this event thoroughly (cf. https://mamlakatona.com/archives/107288, in Arabic).

Table 2: *Qurʿa:* numbers of Moroccans registered and selected (2015-2019)[81]

Year	Registered	Selected/ official	Selected/ agencies	Total Selected	Male	Female	Elderly
2015	264,522	19,500	8,000	27,000	53%	47%	15%
2016	256,413				55%	45%	15%
2017	271,825				51%	49%	15%
2018	311,564				52%	48%	15%
2019	313,027				53%	47%	15%

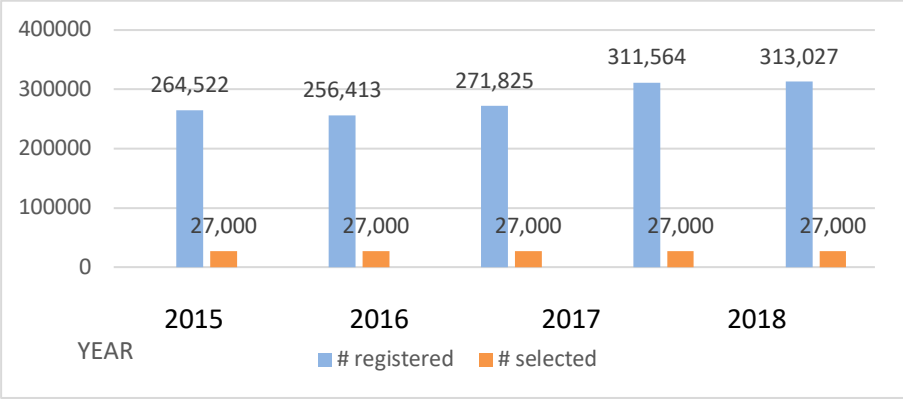

Figure 8: *Qurʿa* winners and Hajj applicants

Although being selected to perform the Hajj in the *qurʿa* is very significant for Moroccans, it is only one step in the arduous process. Once accepted to perform the Hajj, future pilgrims are given a period of time during which they should fulfill their Hajj-related financial duties by depositing the complete Hajj fees in an allocated bank account. Failing to pay those fees in time means that the applicant might lose her/his opportunity to perform Hajj and would subsequently be replaced by another person from the long waiting list. Once payment has been verified by the administration, the prospective pilgrim is required to deliver a 'visa file' – to the relevant authorities – which consists of pilgrim's passport, two personal photographs, and copies of national identification card. Women have to submit other documents all of which are listed in Table 3 below.

[81] Unpublished information provided through personal connections with a local official.

Then, the prospective pilgrim is required to go through a full medical examination, which also involves tests for infectious diseases, as well as compulsory vaccination, which is free for pilgrims, but should be carried out in assigned hospitals or health centers at a specific period before the Hajj. Should the aspiring pilgrim be unable to travel during the allocated year for any reason, these formalities are required again for subsequent applications.

Table 3: Required documentation from female pilgrims (according to civil status)

Single	Married	Divorced	Widow
Civil status certificate[82]	Copy of marriage contract	Marriage certificate	Husband's death certificate
Certified proof of male companion	Husband's consent	Divorce certificate	Civil status certificate
	Companion's approval	Civil status certificate	Companion's approval
Documentary proof of male companion[83]			
National identification card			
National passport			
Two passport-size images			
Photocopy of national identification card			

The procedures after selection are many and varied. In order to illustrate and reflect on these aspects of the pilgrimage, I will give as an example, the experience of *al-ḥājja* Zahra, a retired teacher from Salé.

A pilgrim's trajectory: administrative procedure and a test of faith

Al-ḥājja Zahra performed the Hajj in 2006. It was the first year that Morocco adopted the *qurʿa* as a way of dealing with the growing numbers

[82] According to a local official, the civil status certificate can be obtained from the relevant civil authorities and women are required to submit it.

[83] For women under the age of 45, a *maḥram* (first-degree male companion: father, brother, uncle, or husband) is mandatory for Hajj registration. Women above 45 can travel without *maḥram* but need to be registered with a *rafīq*, a male companion who can accompany a group of women to Hajj and is appointed by the government for women who do not have a first-degree male companion.

of pilgrimage applications. Being a widow over 45 years of age, Zahra decided to apply for Hajj alone, dispensing with the male family supporter required by younger women. She followed the assigned procedure, filled in applications, prepared all required documents and waited for the draw. The drawing of names itself was a tense ceremony, attended by hundreds of potential pilgrims, some of whom had brought family members along too. Local officials, mosque imams, and representatives of travel agencies were present to witness the process. Then, the names were pulled from a large box, one by one. The first was that of *al-ḥājja* Zahra, who was joyous, thanked God for this blessing and immediately called her daughters to deliver the good news.

As the names were read aloud by one of the officials, she could easily identify those selected as they received complimentary words, congratulating them on the good news. Some men would say: "Congratulations," and others would say: "*saʿdātik*" meaning "Lucky you," or "How happy you must now be!" Some women expressed their joy with strident ululations. However, as the reading out of the names of those accepted came to an end, and the official continued to draw out the names that would be on the waiting lists, Zahra could also see disappointment, and heard people telling each other: "God willing, you will be selected next year;" and "Maybe God is hiding for you a greater good."

Once selected, Zahra began preparing herself for the journey. She ordered a local tailor to prepare a white *jellaba* which she planned to wear for her *iḥrām*. She went to the market and bought various necessities. Then, she sought information from people who had been on Hajj, asking about the rites, what to carry from Morocco, and what to expect to see in Mecca. Zahra's daughter bought her a book called *The Guide to Performing Hajj and ʿumra* which included instructions for pilgrims and some historical narratives about each site to be visited.[84]

[84] I was not provided with further publication details about the book in question. I noticed that many bookstands in Morocco often had booklets about the Hajj.

Figure 9: Books about the Hajj found at a local bookshop (Rabat, 10/12/2015)

Weeks after the draw, Zahra was required to continue the Hajj procedures. She had learned that she would need to take blood tests, vaccinations, and prepare her passport for the visa procedure. When she went for vaccination in Salé, however, she learned that her name was not on the lists they had received of pilgrims. Expecting that a mistake had happened, she went to the hospital in Rabat where she was told her name was not on the lists they had either. She was advised to ask at the local government office. There, to her dismay, it was confirmed that her name was not mentioned in the pilgrimage list. Zahra believed that the error was not an innocent accident. She was convinced that there was an attempt to replace her with another pilgrim by some kind of subterfuge. Given the fact that she had submitted all papers in a timely manner, she complained about this matter.

Although Zahra had learnt that she would be going to Hajj a year earlier in the *qurʿa,* once she realized that there was an administrative issue, she became more fearful of not being able to go on Hajj after all. I learned from Zahra's daughter that her mother was deeply affected by the experience and went from extreme happiness to depression and sadness. She walked back and forth between Salé and Rabat, a distance of five kilometers each way, almost daily, to ask about any developments in her case. She complained at the local office and went to the ministry,

which, after considering her case, found that Zahra's name should be put back on the list. By the time Zahra's problem had been resolved, however, groups of pilgrims had already left Morocco for Saudi Arabia. Her passport had not been returned and she was still in the visa procedure. Zahra was profoundly worried that she would miss her chance of going to Hajj. However, two days before the last group of pilgrims left for Mecca, Zahra received good news. Her passport was ready with the Hajj visa, and she was placed on the last flight leaving Morocco.

Although the process was lengthy and highly bureaucratic, Zahra nonetheless saw what happened to her as a good sign, especially when she learned that her group – including many people from the state delegation – had been placed in one of the best hotels, a five-minute-walk from the Grand Mosque. Under normal circumstances, Zahra would have had to pay extra fees to enjoy such a privilege. Had she left earlier, she could have been accommodated at a more distant location, several kilometers away from the mosque. Before leaving for Mecca, Zahra said farewell to her friends and neighbors. If she had learned the good news earlier, she could have invited family and friends for a meal, as is the normal custom, but time constraints prevented this. She asked her daughters and siblings for forgiveness, or *musāmaḥa*, a customary procedure for those leaving on Hajj; she also asked them if they wished for specific *duʿāʾ* prayers to be made on their behalf in Mecca, and inquired about special requests for gifts or souvenirs to be brought back from the holy places. On the day of travel, her daughters and her brother accompanied her to the airport. Mecca being the first destination meant that Zahra should not forget to wear her *iḥrām* clothes before leaving Morocco.

Although Zahra's story had a happy ending, it illustrates that the *qurʿa* process can be stressful, especially as most Moroccans can only perform the Hajj if they are selected in the draw. The official bureaucratic mechanisms can be perceived as placing an obstacle in the path of the pilgrim and may, potentially, create stress which displaces spiritual preparations, substituting instead pragmatic, mundane worries. Therefore, some Moroccans try to find alternative ways to avoid the

lengthy procedure. In the next section, I reflect on some of those alternatives, as I learned about them during my fieldwork in Morocco.

Avoiding the qurʿa procedure

During my fieldwork in Morocco, I learned of several ways in which people manage to avoid the draw, or, when not selected in the process, still manage to find a way to perform the Hajj. People who can afford extra expenses sometimes resort to the black market to obtain a special type of visa referred to in Morocco as *mujāmala* visas; the Arabic term can roughly be translated as *gratis* or *courtesy* visas.[85] The source of this type of visa is often unknown. In Morocco, however, I heard rumors that these visas are issued by the government of Saudi Arabia as gifts, hence the name *mujāmala*, to Muslim majority countries in addition to the number of the people allowed by the quota system. The reason for this gift is to allow government officials or older people to be able to perform the Hajj without being subjected to the *qurʿa* process. In principle, these visas are meant to be free of charge. Therefore, those receiving them should only pay for their transportation and accommodation in addition to Hajj services. In practice, however, these visas reach special dealers in the black market, who sell them to those desperate to perform the Hajj, subverting their original purpose and opening up an avenue of abuse.

Another story that I heard in Morocco about the source of these visas indicated that they can be granted through Saudi embassies in countries where the quota is not met. *Al-ḥājj* Salim, a man who works at a tourist agency in Casablanca, told me about two pilgrims who travelled with him from Morocco to Mecca in 2012, carrying visas that had been issued in Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania. *Al-ḥājj* Salim learned from the two men that they had paid around three thousand Euros each for the visa only. According to *al-ḥājj* Salim:

[85] *Mujāmala* - meaning courtesy - visas refer to guest visas which can be issued outside of the protocol of the quota scheme. According to local travel agents, these visas are sold in the black market illegally by a few Moroccans who benefit from the process (unpublished information).

> In some countries where people are very poor and cannot afford Hajj, their visas are taken by those corrupt dealers. If Mauritania, for example, had a quota of four thousand people and only three thousand could afford the expenses, then the rest of the visas would be sold.

According to *al-ḥājj* Salim, this procedure was terminated in 2015, when the Moroccan government deemed it illegal and denied departure for those holding Hajj visas not issued in Morocco. If people holding such visas were allowed to leave Morocco, they would have been banned from entry at the Saudi side.

Although significant and rigorous procedures have been introduced by the Moroccan government to regulate such illegal visas, there are still stories of corrupt dealers, involved not only in selling visas to aspiring pilgrims, but also in forging visas while claiming they were *mujāmala* visas. In 2018, for example, dozens of people, mainly from Casablanca and Agadir, discovered that they had fallen victim to such practices after having paid large sums of money to three dealers.

As desperate pilgrims paid vast amounts to obtain a Hajj visa, a dispute took place in the Moroccan parliament in June 2018, which was granted five-hundred courtesy visas by the Saudi government.[86] This dispute, news of which reached official and social media and subsequently became a topic of conversation on the streets, concerned the controversial decision to allow parliamentarians or their family members or friends to have visas for Hajj without the troublesome procedure of the *qurʿa* with which ordinary Moroccan citizens must comply.

In Morocco, I witnessed several conversations and disputes regarding the *mujāmala* visas. As an example of these disputes, in the following section, I offer a conversation between two men from the city of Mohammedia: *al-ḥājj* Yassin who had been on Hajj in 2014 and Ayyub, who had yet not performed the Hajj. The conversation took place at Hasan's small factory where Ayyub and I were invited for tea on 28

[86] The dispute in the parliament was reported in local printed newspapers and via online news platforms with headlines including 'Free Hajj visas ignites war in the parliament' (*al-ʾusbūʿ* 07/06/2018).

October 2015. The two men had been friends for many years and the conversation was lengthy; therefore, I will directly cut to the part of their discussion related to the theme of this chapter:

> **Yassin:** I am planning to go on *ʿumra* next Ramadan… I would not be able to register for Hajj again for ten years; yet, I miss those holy places. What about you? Are you planning to apply?[87]
>
> **Ayyub:** You know how expensive the Hajj has become… Not only the fees for the pilgrimage, but also the costs of gifts, parties, and other commitments, these are all so costly… I need to take these costs into consideration. But I might apply for the *qurʿa* next year.
>
> **Yassin:** It would be good if you apply. You know, it is difficult to be selected in the *qurʿa* anyhow.
>
> **Ayyub:** Yes, I know! I heard that some people avoided this lottery in previous years by looking for *mujāmala* visas.
>
> **Yassin:** They are more expensive. I heard from friends that one might pay up to nine million centimes [around nine thousand Euros], just to get the visa.
>
> **Ayyub:** But I heard that doing such things [buying a *mujāmala* visa] is taboo [*ḥarām*].
>
> **Yassin:** The halal [permissible] and the *ḥarām* [taboo] are both specified in the Holy Qurʾan.[88] I do not think it is *ḥarām*! If a person is blessed to have enough money, why would they not go? Especially if they do not get selected by the state's *qurʿa*! A person can go to a travel agency which has

[87] The pilgrimage guidelines state that once a pilgrim has been to Mecca for the Hajj, they cannot apply to again for at least ten years.

[88] Sometimes Moroccans would make allusions to the Qurʾan (or the Prophet) – as popular knowledge –without specifics being provided. In relation to the permissible or taboo argument, the Qurʾan has several related verses mainly in relation to food and consumption activities, as in "You who believe, eat the good things We have provided for you and be grateful to God, if it is Him that you worship. He has only forbidden you carrion, blood, pig's meat, and animals over which any name other than God's has been invoked. But if anyone is forced to eat such things by hunger, rather than desire or excess, he commits no sin: God is most merciful and forgiving." (Qurʾan 2, 172-173). Other examples can be found in Qurʾan including verses 5, 3; 5, 5; 6, 121; and 7, 33.

> relationships with people in Saudi Arabia who offer visas as gifts... It is fine; if people are blessed from God to have enough money, they can go that way… After all, we all go for a major purpose: [God's] forgiveness of our sins... Pilgrims use money and sacrifice their time and leave their families behind to go to that place and to be closer to God.

The conversation between *al-ḥājj* Yassin and Ayyub reflects the two contrasting opinions regarding the *mujāmala* visas among Moroccans. Some people, like Yassin, do not see the harm in such a procedure. The pilgrimage becomes possible for those "who can afford it." The majority of people, however, find the procedure highly unjust, disadvantaging the poor, and unfair to those who comply with the official procedures of Hajj application. From a religious point of view, many people consider it *ḥarām* to involve oneself in such a questionable activity, even if one could afford the costs. In the words of Ayyub to me – in private – following our meeting with Yassin: "Would God accept a pilgrimage based on corruption and deceit?"

The *mujāmala* visa and dubious methods of acquiring them are, it seems, often available to those who can afford to pay their costs. However, people with limited funds, who have also been unlucky in the draw but desperately wish to perform the pilgrimage, may try to find other means to fulfill their ambition. Those means might also be considered unethical or even illegal, but they are under less popular scrutiny than the stratagems adopted by the rich. As an illustration, one trick is to travel to Saudi Arabia to undertake an *ʿumra* during the period leading up to the Hajj (before the tenth month of the lunar calendar).[89] In recent years the latest dates for *ʿumra* trips were during the month of Ramadan, after which there is a period of approximately two months until the start of the Hajj season. Those wishing to perform the Hajj could remain in the country illegally, extending their visit until the time of the Hajj.

[89] According to the Saudi regulations, *ʿumra* visas stop after Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar calendar. The period following Ramadan aims at preparing for the Hajj season. *ʿumra* reopens again at the new lunar year (unpublished information provided by a Moroccan travel agent).

According to *al-ḥājj* Salim, only a small number of Moroccan pilgrims performed their Hajj by using this tactic in recent years as the Saudi control measures have become stricter. If detected by the Saudi authorities during the period leading to the Hajj season, the aspiring pilgrims would be deported back to Morocco, possibly also being subjected to large fines and they would be denied entry to Saudi Arabia for ten years. A very small number of Moroccans, however, manage to break the Saudi regulation. To evade being captured by the police, these people have to live through difficult conditions until their Hajj is finally complete. When I interviewed *al-ḥājj* Salim about this practice, he told me:

> The Saudi authorities have made it much harder for those who stay for Hajj illegally by adopting new procedures including having intensive inspections and checkpoints in the Mecca and Jeddah areas. However, there are dealers there who would take those who wish to stay and hide them… They hide in places in the mountains or remote villages outside of Mecca; they endure two months of suffering and live with the fear of being found… They cannot go out, if they are found, they would be deported… Then, if they manage to stay, they return to Mecca and hope not to be found, seeking concealment among more than two million pilgrims… Once they decide to return to Morocco, however, they have to deal with the consequences at the airport… But whatever these [consequences] are, it is over! They are now pilgrims…

Here again, we see how the religious practice of Hajj is tightly framed by social conditions, financial ability, and the way Hajj policies and regulations are being managed. The sacred duty of performing the pilgrimage and the mandatory practices related to the application procedure are inextricably intertwined and pilgrims cannot separate the spiritual aim from the mundane constraints placed upon its realization. During my fieldwork, I did not meet any Moroccan who openly acknowledged having stayed in Mecca illegally to perform the Hajj, nor proudly admitted that they paid extra for a pilgrimage visa. The reason for this, according to *al-ḥājj* Salim, is that pilgrimage is a sacred duty which people wish to complete. But, to admit engaging in illicit practices,

would be compromising. Nevertheless, he told me several stories of people who illegally stayed in Mecca after Ramadan to perform the Hajj, and of others who performed the Hajj using other unlawful means.

For Moroccans who cannot fulfill the pilgrimage to Mecca, either legally or illegally, an alternative religious avenue is sought, such is the urge of many to travel to Mecca. Performing the *ʿumra*, therefore, is a popular way of dealing with the disappointment of not being selected by the *qurʿa*. In the following section, I offer the story of Yasir, a man in his sixties, as an example.

ʿUmra as an alternative pilgrimage to Hajj

For many Moroccans who cannot perform the Hajj due to the various conditions previously discussed, going on *ʿumra* seems a suitable alternative. In 2018, for example, according to local travel agents with whom I spoke, more than one hundred thousand Moroccans performed the *ʿumra*, and more than thirty thousand people in the month of Ramadan alone. The numbers were even higher in 2019 as – according to a local official – one hundred thousand Moroccans performed the *ʿumra* in Ramadan and some eighty thousand at other times of the year.[90] When I met Yasir, a fabric shop owner from Fes, he told me that he had undertaken five *ʿumra* trips. He performed his first *ʿumra* in 2005, together with a group of friends, all of whom had failed to be selected in the *qurʿa*. The second was in 2008 with his wife, the third in Ramadan of 2011 and he had made this journey once every two years since then. He explained to me that on each occasion when he applied for Hajj, he wished to be accepted, yet he believed it was God's will that he was not. Yasir told me that he would go to Mecca every year if he could, so great was the call, and so intense was his longing for the holy places. Yasir could not imagine that any Moroccan would not wish to visit those places. In total, Yasir had applied for the *qurʿa* five times – and failed on each

[90] Unpublished information provided by local official through personal connections. According to the same official, an average of 140,000 Moroccans performed *ʿumra* yearly between 2015 and 2019.

occasion – to be selected for the Hajj. For him, the alternative, *ʿumra,* has become a form of compensation and a leisure activity, which succeeds in satisfying his longing for Mecca and Medina and uses the funds he had saved in the hope of making Hajj. Such is his expectation of failure in the *qurʿa* that he now never attends the draw procedure, secure in the knowledge that he will be informed if, by chance, he is successful.

Figure 10: Posters advertising for *ʿumra* offers in Ramadan (Tangier, 23/07/2019)

Yasir, however, believed that applying for Hajj and not being selected was a test of his faith and that when he was ready, God would surely reward him with Hajj. His fear, however, was that he would grow older without being able to perform Hajj. For him, the pilgrimage demands that one is healthy and strong enough to perform the rituals to optimum effects. Driven by a different imperative, many Moroccans still wish to perform the Hajj when older. They long to be able "to cleanse themselves from sins and get ready to meet God," as Yasir told me. For Yasir:

> [Pilgrimage] is like marriage; one might think, I want to get married when I am 35 years old; wiser and have the financial means; but if that man meets the right woman and God

> helped him, they might get married at 25… Pilgrimage is similar… When the opportunity comes, I do not want to miss it…

Yasir used the simile of marriage to clarify his point. For him, one should perform the Hajj whenever one is able to do so. Like marriage, however, one might be ready for it on a personal level, but, if a person's destiny were to be married later, then they would have to wait until the right time. I saw Yasir frequently during my stay in Fes; I greeted him whenever I passed by his shop and stopped to chat frequently. Despite the passage of time, he remained hopeful that he would be able to go on Hajj.

The pilgrimage process and motivations, encompassing the religious and the mundane

In the previous sections of this chapter, I described the procedure that takes place when Moroccans apply for the Hajj. During the application process, Moroccans often reflected on why it was important, for them, as individuals, as Muslims, and as part of the larger Muslim community to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. During my interactions with prospective pilgrims in Morocco, they often spoke about their motivation for applying for the Hajj. Like *al-ḥājj* Jamal, many Moroccans portrayed their motivations in religious terms including the "renewal of one's faith," "connecting with God at the most holy place for Muslims" or simply "because it is a religious duty" and "one of the pillars of Islam." *Al-ḥājj* Yassin encapsulated people's motivations during his aforementioned conversation with Ayyub, when he said:

> …Hajj is always present in all Moroccan houses... Everyone who is able to perform Hajj, should apply and go… I think if people had visas, and financial means, everyone would go on Hajj. Hajj is not an extra thing; it is an obligation… Who wouldn't like to answer the call of God, or visit the Prophet? Through Hajj, one can address God, recognize His oneness, thank Him for His blessings, seek His forgiveness for the sins one has committed and repent for one's wrong doings… In Mecca, one feels closer to God and one can express gratitude by answering God's call for pilgrimage…

The words of *al-ḥājj* Yassin echo those of most of the Moroccans I met. Indeed, for many, registering for the Hajj was an attempt to answer God's proclamation regarding the performance of Hajj. Therefore, when they went through the *qurʿa*, regardless of being selected or not; many referred to this divine call. To be selected from tens of thousands who apply for Hajj every year, for example, was considered to be a sign of God's approval. Referring to their acceptance, my interlocutors used expressions such as: "it was God's will," "God's blessing," or "God's favor" (*bi-faḍli-llāh*). Interestingly, the Arabic expression *faḍl* also refers to preference, connoting a sense of being 'chosen' by God, or favored by Him. On the other hand, people who were not selected often considered it to be a sign of a different nature, that it was not the right time to perform the pilgrimage and "when the right time comes, one would certainly answer God's proclamation," as Ayyoub stated. Success or failure in the *qurʿa* is ascribed to God's will and the devout are more able to accept the outcomes as a result of this deeply rooted belief.

As has been already mentioned, the process that precedes the performance of the pilgrimage is a lengthy one. There is a period of one year between the time of registration, passing through the *qurʿa* and preparation for the Hajj, until the actual time of travel to Mecca. In this period of time, various material factors might hinder a person from performing the pilgrimage. A person might fail to meet the financial fees of the pilgrimage, a woman could become pregnant, one might fall sick or even die. In those cases, Moroccans often interpreted such situations in religious terms, however worldly or mundane the roots of the obstacle might be. According to *al-ḥājj* Salim: "If a person really wished to perform the pilgrimage, and for any reason were not able to make the journey, God would accept one's intention and still reward him/her." According to many Moroccans, one's intention (*niyya*) is recognized by God and therefore, one may be rewarded even if one does not manage to perform the pilgrimage.

One example of such interference in the pilgrimage is the case of Sarah, the daughter-in-law of *al-ḥājj* Jamal. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, when selected in the national draw, *al-ḥājj*

Jamal, together with his wife, son, and daughter-in-law, were among the lucky ones. However, following the draw, Sarah found out that she was pregnant. She was due to give birth only two weeks before the pilgrimage to Mecca would take place. The news of her pregnancy was both a source of joy and regret. The family was happy to receive the news of the pregnancy; however, they, and Sarah specifically (according to her father-in-law), were disappointed for her not being able to perform the pilgrimage with her family. For *al-ḥājj* Jamal, the pregnancy was a sign that God's proclamation for Sarah's Hajj was yet to be made. He hoped that in the next years, she could apply for the *qurʿa* once more, and if selected, her husband would accompany her as male guardian.[91]

During my fieldwork, I noticed that Moroccans often spoke about the pilgrimage as a practice that strengthens one's faith and solidifies one's relationship with God. Hajj, it seemed, was not just an obligation that a Muslim has to perform once in a lifetime. Rather, engaging in Hajj actually helped to constitute and solidify moral commitment to one's faith over time. As *al-ḥājja* Zahra put it:

> I wanted to perform Hajj to experience that feeling of belonging, of being a member of a bigger Islamic community; Hajj *renews* one's faith and cleanses the pilgrim from all sins one might have committed during his life… I grew up hearing stories from my parents and grandparents about the Hajj, looking at the Kaʿba on TV, and learning about it from the Qurʾan and religious texts…

The collective narratives, widely circulated in Moroccan society, about people who have already been to Mecca to perform the Hajj and *ʿumra*, seems to be a further motivation for the performance of the Hajj. People were often encouraged to apply for Hajj, as *al-ḥājj* Yassin did, when he conversed with Ayyub. Moreover, the performance of the Hajj includes an aspiration of transformation of one's status both on a religious and on a social level. At the personal level, the performance of pilgrimage is an

[91] Despite the ten-year prohibition imposed on those who successfully perform the Hajj, a male pilgrim who has been to Hajj less than ten years previously can still accompany a female first-degree relative to the Hajj as a male guardian (*maḥram*).

opportunity for self-development and transformation to a better Muslim. As *al-ḥājj* Jamal said when I met him, the Hajj is a school (*madrasa).* As he put it:

> When people go on Hajj, people learn a lot; about life, other Muslims, and about their faith... People should not go empty handed and return empty... People should return with good hearts and deeds; never lie, never cheat and stay faithful... Their children and wives should witness that change and they too should benefit from the Hajj.

Although Moroccans mainly state religious reasons for performing the pilgrimage, I learned of other motivations that are sometimes debated whenever the pilgrimage topic is discussed. One motivation for pilgrimage was related to the social status a pilgrim often enjoys upon the completion of this religious duty. In comparison with the past, there are far larger numbers of people who successfully perform the Hajj. Yet the title *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja* remains highly significant at both personal and social levels as form of social, religious and moral capital.[92] In their family and in daily life in their wider community, pilgrims are highly respected and well regarded.[93]

Nonetheless, when declaring their own Hajj motivations, people will avoid reference to such acquired personal 'kudos' as a motive, and only put forward the religious reasons related to strengthening one's faith and religious transformation. Yet, when speaking about others who make or have made Hajj, non-religious and perhaps even questionable motives also come to the fore. Although becoming a pilgrim, and therefore being addressed as *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja,* is highly valuable in Moroccan society, the fact of wishing to be addressed as such is rarely openly expressed by a person wishing to perform the Hajj. The perception that a person might have had this motivation would be frowned upon and openly criticized. It is worth mentioning here that during my fieldwork I noticed that women were often the ones subjected

[92] On forms of capital see Bourdieu 1986.
[93] The honorific title *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja* comes with significant social and religious significance which I will discuss in Chapter Four.

to such criticism.[94] This might be related to stereotypical views of women, assuming them to be attracted to social status more readily than their male counterparts and of women as being driven more by desires, less by religious motives (cf. Sadiqi 2003; Ennaji 2008; Buitelaar 1993).[95]

Before leaving Morocco for Mecca, future pilgrims say farewell to their friends and neighbors. Such events are an interesting combination of the spiritually, religiously observant practices and far more mundane habits. It is a religious expectation that pilgrims will settle their disputes and, if in debt, pay their financial obligations before departing for Mecca. Saying farewell became a custom in Morocco in the times when those leaving on Hajj were not all expected to return. Therefore, as was described by *al-ḥājj* Zahra earlier, a prospective pilgrim is expected to visit family and friends and ask for their forgiveness for any deed that may have hurt or damaged them. In return, often family members and friends visit those leaving on Hajj, ask for *duʿāʾ* prayers on their behalf in Mecca, either in front of the Kaʿba, or on the day when pilgrims are at Arafat. In addition, they might ask for gifts and souvenirs to be brought specifically from Mecca. Some of these objects may have religious connotations including the water of Zamzam, prayer mats, or scarfs while others are less obviously so, like henna and a herbal plant known as 'the tree of the virgin Mary', a plant that is believed to cure infertile women. This combination of the religious and material or mundane requests can also be seen in the types of prayers that relatives and friends ask of a departing pilgrim. As I witnessed the departure of pilgrims many times either in their houses or at the airport, I heard a variety of requests for prayers ranging from asking for God's forgiveness and blessings, praying that God would help in being selected for pilgrimage, to God's assistance in finding a good husband or success in passing university or school exams. As for the pilgrim, all the requests are met with a single promise: *in-shāʾ-Allāh* (if God wills!).

[94] For examples on women's experiences as pilgrim see Chapter Four and Chapter Seven.
[95] See Chapter Four.

Another customary practice observed by many Moroccans before leaving for Mecca is a practice that was referred to as voluntary charity, *ṣadaqa*, or a banquet, *walīma*, a meal for family and friends that takes place at the house of the prospective pilgrim. Such gatherings are often organized upon a pilgrim's return from Mecca. Yet, many Moroccans also have a get-together, often smaller, before leaving for Mecca. In addition to sharing food, the gathering sometimes includes Qur'an recitation, listening to music, mostly of religious themes but sometimes also non-religious, or singing and dancing. Although this practice is still popular in Morocco, many people criticized the profane or worldly aspects of the gathering, particularly the singing and dancing. In addition, some people were disapproving of the *ṣadaqa*. As the name *ṣadaqa* indicates, the purpose of the meal is to stage an act of charity, an act provided by the pilgrim's family. Those invited to this charitable meal, however, are rarely the poor or the ones in need of charitable giving. Therefore, many Moroccans consider it an unnecessary spending before the Hajj. Instead, those not in favor of this practice suggest, a prospective pilgrim should undertake 'moral preparation', such as increased praying or fasting, pilgrimage lessons at local mosques, and solving disputes that might be old or new in preparation for the sacred journey.

In the next section, I focus on the pilgrimage lessons at the local mosques as one aspect of the preparation of the pilgrimage journey I witnessed during my fieldwork in Morocco.

A pilgrimage lesson in Fes

Pilgrimage lessons have become a common phenomenon in recent years in Morocco. Some are organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs at mosques and others by travel agencies. Information about the dates and times of the lessons are advertised on the ministry's website online. I, however, learned about the lesson described below through a travel agency in Fes. When I visited the agency to learn about the Hajj procedures, I saw a poster offering Hajj lessons which would take place in Al-Baraka Mosque every Sunday after *ʿaṣr*, late afternoon prayer.

Hoping to learn more about the lessons and to meet people who were preparing for their pilgrimage, I attended the Hajj lessons. The lesson described here was the second in a series of ten lessons.

As already mentioned, the lesson took place on a Sunday afternoon. I arrived half an hour early for the prayer to find that the doors of the mosque were still locked. Outside on the stairs leading to the women's section of the mosque, a woman in a brown dress and blue headscarf waited patiently for the man who worked at the mosque to open the door. Five minutes later, a young man showed up, opened the door and left. Inside, the woman prayed two *rakʿa*s of voluntary prayer before sitting and resting her back on one of the pillars in the room. I sat next to the woman and we started a conversation.

I learned that the woman was also at the mosque for the Hajj lesson. She and her husband were among the lucky ones selected in the draw of the previous year and would be going on Hajj in less than two months. At that point two other women joined us. One of the two newcomers told us that she learned about the lessons by chance and had missed the first one. When she had registered, this woman was told that pilgrims would be notified of the location of Hajj lessons, but this had not been the case. The third woman told us that she was informed about the lessons through the travel agency with which she would be travelling to Hajj along with her mother-in-law and husband.

Another topic the women discussed before prayer was related to practical arrangements for the Hajj. They discussed the health reports they were preparing in order to carry along in case of health emergency and necessary travel documents to bring to Mecca. They then spoke about their expectations of the Hajj conditions in Mecca and Medina. One of the women said that she watched TV programs about the Hajj which recommended prospective pilgrims not to be frightened when they see the number of people they would meet during the Hajj. A second woman had heard in a radio program that pilgrims were recommended to be at the airport six hours before the time of the flight.

The women also discussed the dress code in Mecca. One of the women stated that she would carry one Moroccan *jellaba* and buy others

in Mecca to wear during the Hajj; those would be black dresses, *ʿabāyas*, like those worn by women in Saudi Arabia. The other two women disagreed and stated that they would wear Moroccan dresses, which they made specifically for Hajj, at all times.

The women then discussed financial needs during the Hajj. One of the women said that she had been warned by previous pilgrims to beware of possible thieves. One should not carry much money and should leave valuables at the safe of the hotel. Pilgrims were advised, according to the women, not to consume much food and water. One of the women commented that Zamzam water could be consumed by the pilgrims as much as they liked, as it is water which "goes directly into one's body and a person does not need a toilet after."

The conversation continued, dominated by practicalities, tips and advice of a relatively worldly and practical nature. Some discussions did relate to religious matters. For instance, the women discussed the best times to perform *ṭawāf* and prayers. One of them advised the others to perform *ṭawāf* between prayers especially in the early morning or evening hours when the heat would be less harsh. The women noted that it would be better to sleep less and pray more. They rehearsed what they had learned in the previous lesson related to performing the *niyya* of the Hajj, "O God, I intend to perform *ʿumra* and Hajj. So, make them easy for me and accept them from me." They then listed the rituals to be performed once at the Grand Mosque of Mecca including *ṭawāf*, the *saʿī* between the hills of Ṣafā and Marwā, and completing the *ʿumra* (for women by cutting off a short lock of hair). One woman read from a notebook that she carried:

> Remember, when you drink the water of Zamzam you can say a specific *duʿāʾ* prayer, of '*Allāhumma innī asʾaluka ʿilman nāfiʿan wa rizqan wasiʿan wa shifāʾan min kullī dāʾ* [O God, I seek beneficial knowledge, wide sustenance and cure from

all ailments from You]',[96] then say *bismi-llāh*,[97] and drink the water.

The women agreed to meet again before prayer the following Sunday, once they had discovered where their accommodation in Mecca would be, in order to arrange a meeting with each other during the Hajj. One of the women declared that she had agreed with some other women traveling with the same agency to Mecca to carry specific food items from Morocco including potatoes, tomatoes, olive oil and herbs. She feared that the food in Mecca would be too foreign or unsuitable. Those women were travelling to Mecca for the first time and uncertain of what they would find there. Another woman who had heard through former pilgrims that there were plenty of familiar food stuffs available in Mecca and Medina and there was no need to carry food from Morocco, told the others that women, herself included, should focus on the rituals of worship rather than thinking of food or shopping. They all agreed but mentioned that it would still be their responsibility to prepare the food during the pilgrimage.

At that point, the imam recited the *iqāma*, the announcement that prayer was about to commence. The women stopped their conversation and stood in line in preparation for the communal prayer that was about to take place. Around eighty women had gathered at the mosque for prayer and nearly all remained for the lesson at the end of prayers. For this purpose, they moved to the men's section of the mosque where the imam, giving the lesson, and some sixty men, sat in the front; the women took their places at the back. Some women took notebooks out of their bags and took notes during the lesson. The imam had a PowerPoint presentation installed on a small computer screen next to him. On his other side, a large box was painted in black to give an idea of the structure

[96] This *duʿāʾ* prayer is said to have been recommended by the prophet Muhammad in hadith (cf. Ibn Mājah, Vol.1, book 5, hadith 925).

[97] *Bismi-llāh* is a short version of *bismi-Allāh al-raḥmāni al-raḥīm* (In the name of God, the Merciful Benefactor) which also called *basmala* or *tasmiya.* The invocation of the *basmala* is recommended for Muslims at the beginning of every important act for blessing such as reciting the Qurʾan, eating, drinking, etc. (cf. Carra de Vaux and Gardet 2012).

of the Kaʿba. Some of the women moved closer to be able to see the PowerPoint presentation yet keeping an acceptable distance from the men. Although the imam used a loudspeaker, his voice was not clear in the women's section of the mosque.

Carrying two pieces of white cloth, the imam first showed the men how to wear the *iḥrām* clothes. He then instructed the women to wear any comfortable clothes as long as they were modest and covering their full bodies. Next, the imam circumambulated the black box to show the future pilgrims how to perform *ṭawāf* around the *Kaʿba*. He explained that pilgrims should perform each rite of the Hajj to the best of their ability. "Hajj is performed once in a lifetime for most people; therefore, there is no chance to repeat the rites if they are performed in a wrong manner," he concluded. Following the explanation of the rituals, the imam advised the pilgrims to start their journey by reciting the *duʿā'* prayer of travel.[98] Several women noted the prayer in their notebooks.

The class took around one and a half hours. People had the chance to ask questions during the last half hour. One man asked whether the Hajj rites varied according to different *madhhabs* (schools of Islamic jurisprudence).[99] The imam explained that the main rites were the same for all Muslims although there were minor differences. He gave an example of *ṭawāf al-wadāʿ*, the last circulation of the Kaʿba which pilgrims perform before leaving Mecca and explained that the last *ṭawāf* is considered obligatory according to Hanafi and Hanbali schools yet is considered *mustaḥabb*, desirable, though not obligatory, according to the Maliki school that is followed in Morocco. This explanation meant that if pilgrims were not able to perform the last *ṭawāf*, no penalty is incurred

[98] Muslims are encouraged to do a *duʿā'* prayer when travelling, according to one hadith: "O God, we seek virtue and piety from You in this journey of ours and the act which pleases You. O God, lighten this journey of ours, and make its distance easy for us. O Allah, You are (our) companion during the journey, and guardian of (our) family. O God, I seek refuge with You from the hardships of the journey, gloominess of the sights, and finding adverse changes to property and family on return." (Muslim, book 15, hadith 479).

[99] A *madhhab* refers to a school of thought within *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Most Sunni Muslims follow one of the four major Sunni school (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafiʿi, Hanbali). Moroccans follow the Maliki *madhhab.*

for the default. Towards the end, he indicated that Moroccan pilgrims should follow the Maliki *madhhab*, in accordance with what he taught them about the Hajj.

At the end of the lesson, the women left the room first. Some left immediately while most stood outside the mosque to discuss what they heard from the imam, further preparations for the journey, and arrangements for travel. Again, many women discussed food necessities, clothing, and housing arrangement. Although all of those issues might seem mundane in relation to the religious aspect of the Hajj, nonetheless, according to one of the women outside the mosque: "It is necessary to arrange those things so they would not be a source of distraction during the Hajj." For her, managing issues related to food, clothing, and accommodation is an essential foundation for a better Hajj experience. As the women said goodbye to each other to go home, I had the impression that they were content about what they had learned that afternoon.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been on the preparatory rituals preceding the performance of the Hajj in Morocco. I began by unpacking the administrative and religious practices that take place starting from the time a Moroccan makes the intention to perform the Hajj until their physical departure to Mecca. Reflecting on the procedures a pilgrim has to take before being able to perform the Hajj, I showed how in these steps religious and mundane factors are inextricably intertwined as part of the daily lives of Moroccans and how, in the process, people's personal desires and spiritual hopes are combined with their fear about the *qurʿa* itself and their nervousness about other practical steps they need to overcome before being allowed to go to Mecca. Thus, awaiting the *qurʿa* involves much anticipation and even stress, especially for those who may have failed in previous applications.

Arguably, the *qurʿa* is the most problematical of the procedures preceding the Hajj. If selected at the *qurʿa*, a person is considered lucky and it is often seen as a sign of God's approval of the pilgrimage intention.

However, the spiritual elation is quickly followed by concerns about more mundane and trivial details and considerations including travel, food, clothing, etiquette and social customs before departure. Those rejected – although frustrated – take consolation in religious responses to their situation including an embracing of the concept of God's will and their own destiny.

Due to the limitations imposed by the *qurʿa* system, some Moroccans look for alternatives to be able to perform the Hajj including purchasing very expensive visas or committing actions that can be considered illicit or illegal, such as overstaying in Mecca outside the pilgrimage season until the time of the pilgrimage. In this grey area between legal and illegal practices, one can detect corruption in the administrative process governing Hajj. Besides the prospective pilgrims themselves, many others are involved in the process, opening up opportunities for abuse.

Preparation for the Hajj is nearly as much a social as a personal affair. This comes to the fore in the passing on of advice, or in terms of people helping others to iron out troubles or obstacles which can arise including missteps in the bureaucratic process itself (as was the case of Zahra, the woman who fell off the pilgrim list). Even relative strangers, such as the women who met at the mosque, become involved in discussions of a quite detailed nature and are assumed to be a legitimate and helpful source of support. This reflects the way in which Hajj and all its stages seem to be fully integrated into the fabric of life in Morocco.

Many of the preparations that take place before the pilgrimage are far from spiritual. There are a lot of 'travelers' tips' and many such tips might seem not to be related at all to the spiritual impetus behind the Hajj. However, as the women in the mosque asserted, being well-prepared means pilgrims can fully immerse themselves in the religious aspects of pilgrimage experience once they arrive in Mecca, having dealt with all potential material distractions beforehand. In the narratives of Moroccan pilgrims, there are still strongly religious threads running through this mass of worldly anxieties. Often these manifest themselves in quasi-ritual expressions of hope, faith and blessing.

Thus, the period of preparation may seem to be awash with mundane matters, but perhaps they act as hand-servants to the still-to-come spiritual experience. This spiritual experience shall be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

In the Hajj: A Sensory Experience that 'Cannot be Described in Words'

Let's walk in paths of safety,
God, the Prophet, and the Qurʾan are with us;
With God, and lights of certitude before us,
And with our faith,
We will overcome every oppression
(Lyrics of Moroccan song)

Introduction

A few days after my arrival to Fes, I met Hanan, a local tailor whose shop was across the street from the house where I lived. Hanan spent most of her time at the shop. She had performed the Hajj in 2006, and ever since she has visited Mecca for *ʿumra* at least once a year. When I visited Hanan's shop, she was often busy guiding the work of two women and three men who would spend their day designing and preparing Moroccan traditional dresses, *qafṭān*s and *ṭaqshiṭa*s.[100] Hanan herself was very stylish, often wearing elegant skirts with matching shirts and colorful head scarves that revealed some of her dyed hair. When I visited Hanan's shop, I expressed my interest in learning about her experience in Mecca. Hanan's first reaction was a sigh followed by a few seconds of silence. She then told me that if I wanted to learn about the experience of being in Mecca, I should go to visit it myself as – for her – that was the only way one would understand the importance of the journey. In her words: "the pilgrimage was an unforgettable experience," and "a chance in a lifetime to experience a place that was better than any other place." As

[100] *Qafṭān* in Morocco is commonly used to mean a one-piece dress worn exclusively by women, both as an everyday outfit and haute-couture attire – depending on the material. *Taqshiṭa* (a loanword from Tamazight) is a two-piece version of the *qafṭān* that is worn with a large belt, primarily on formal occasions (cf. Sellam and Dellal 2013, 165).

my visits to Hanan's shop continued, I got to hear more about her trips to Mecca, the places she visited, her prayers and thoughts, and the people she met during the pilgrimage, both Moroccans and foreigners.

One afternoon, I sat with Hanan and two women who worked with her at the shop. The front room of the shop had four chairs where we sat and a desk, behind which was another chair where Hanan would sit when serving customers. The front of the shop was made of glass so that those inside could see the passers-by in the street, while those passing could see the new dresses displayed on two female mannequins. Hanan was telling us about the day of pilgrimage draw, *qurʿa*, when she learned she would be going on Hajj. Before her Hajj, Hanan had prayed that she could make the pilgrimage to Mecca:

> I wished for a pilgrimage in which the Day of Arafat [when pilgrims perform the rite of *wuqūf* or standing at Mount Arafat] would be on a Friday. I would say: 'O Lord! Grant me the Hajj in which the standing on the Day of Arafat is a Friday…' If so, it would be considered *al-ḥājj al-akbar* [a greater pilgrimage]. Then, I would have two celebrations: one for Hajj and another for Friday.[101]

Hanan believed that a pilgrimage in which the Day of Arafat fell on a Friday was more blessed than any other and she was grateful that her prayers had been heard, as the Day of Arafat would in fact fall on a Friday when she would go on Hajj.

Upon hearing Hanan's story, the two other women looked affected by it. One of them commented that even though she had never been to Mecca, it was a dream of hers to perform Hajj or *ʿumra*. The other woman commented: "It is the dream of every Muslim! May God never

[101] People in Morocco had told me that if the Day of Arafat, which is the highlight of the Hajj, occurred on a Friday, then it would be called *al-ḥājj al-akbar*. I could not find such reference in any *fiqh* book that I read on the topic. However, the *fiqh* and hadith books state that Hajj itself is *al-ḥājj al-akbar* (greater Hajj) whilst *ʿumra* is *al-ḥājj al-asghar* (lesser Hajj) (Muslim, book 15, hadith 491). One interpretation of this hadith is that the phrase *al-ḥājj al-akbar* is used in contrast to *al-ḥājj al-asghar* which the Arabs used for *ʿumra*. Another interpretation is that *al-ḥājj al-akbar refers* to the tenth of the last month of the lunar calendar and is also known as *yawm al-nahr* (day of sacrifice) which is also the first day of the feast of sacrifice (cf. Al-Bukhārī, book 58, hadith 19).

prevent anyone from [accessing] these holy places." Reconfirming her prayer, the two others said: "Amen!".

At that moment, Hanan saw someone she knew passing by the shop. "*Al-ḥājja* Amina! *Al-ḥājja*!" Hanan called and raised her voice to get the attention of the woman outside. The woman raised her hand in greeting and walked towards the shop, which she entered, greeting us before she spoke to Hanan briefly. Hanan wanted her to choose a fabric for a new *jellaba* Amina had asked her to make pink or green, she had to make a choice. While Amina tried the two pieces of fabric, I learned that she had been to *ʿumra* with Hanan. She had been on Hajj in 2003 and on *ʿumra* once every year in the past seven years. Hanan suggested that Amina join us to tell me about her experience, a suggestion to which Amina answered: "What is there to say? That experience cannot be described with words!"[102]

As my fieldwork in Morocco progressed, I often heard words similar to those spoken by Hanan and Amina describing the pilgrimage to Mecca as a journey beyond words, a journey that one has to personally experience to understand its importance and effect. On several occasions, pilgrims told me that the experience cannot be fully grasped without experiencing, feeling, and sensing what they had experienced, felt and sensed.

In their narratives of their pilgrimage experiences, Moroccan pilgrims spoke of the importance of the Hajj as a sacred journey which freed them from sins and, importantly, gave them the opportunity to ask for God's forgiveness and mercy. Furthermore, pilgrims often described what they saw and heard, the food that they ate, and the prayers they recited. They expressed their bodily reactions during the pilgrimage including the tears they shed at different sites with references to 'goose bumps' and 'pounding hearts' to convey profound excitement and awe. In a way, the pilgrims were sharing their pilgrimage experience by 'seeking the senses' (Sparkes 2009).

Taking the narratives of Moroccan pilgrims as my point of departure in this chapter, I shall discuss the pilgrimage experience

[102] Fieldnotes, 10/08/2015.

through its capacity to address the physical senses of pilgrims through which their emotions are evoked (cf. de Witte 2011; Meyer 2009, 2006; Hirschkind 2006). I will analyze how pilgrims reflect on their experience in Mecca and Medina through expressions of bodily sensations and spiritual feelings. Building on theoretical perspectives of the anthropology of emotions and the senses, I will reflect on how in the narratives of Moroccan pilgrims the pilgrimage comes to the fore as a religious experience that has the capacity to influence the body and the senses. I will argue that sharing the experience of the Hajj with others – mainly though oral narratives – reflects the richness of the experience. At the personal level, I argue, the use of senses in descriptions of the pilgrimage allows for expressing continuous awareness of and presence in the time and place of the pilgrimage for the individual. At the group level, I argue that sharing the experience allows the audience to develop their own religious sentiments, so that Hajj narratives trigger stimulation of feelings and emotions in the audience, both those who have been to Hajj and those who have not, as is the case of the women described earlier.

In this sense, sharing the experience is a cultural act that conditions people's expectations of certain physical and emotional reactions which they might expect to experience during the pilgrimage. Both those who have performed the Hajj and prospective pilgrims may thus – consciously or unconsciously – anticipate certain emotions related to the various rites during the pilgrimage. Moreover, what pilgrims experience later becomes a point of reference in their everyday lives. While in what follows I describe references to the five senses, my aim is to move beyond these descriptions and incorporate them ethnographically into an analysis of everyday practices, experiences and communications (cf. Schielke and Debevec 2012; Howes 2003).

Engaging with anthropologist Fiona C. Ross's call (2004, 41) to take "seriously the ways that we engage in and with space/place, filling it with activity, relations, sensual engagements, interpretive activity, [and] emotions," I use the narratives of Moroccan pilgrims and my own observations during two *ʿumra* trips to understand how performing the

pilgrimage is inter alia a sensory experience (cf. Hemer and Dundon 2016; Stoller 1997, 1989). Therefore, this chapter is structured as follows: first, it outlines some theoretical insights into the sensorial aspects of the pilgrimage. Next, there is a discussion of how Moroccan pilgrims express their pilgrimage experience through the five dominant senses: the visual, olfactory, aural, haptic and taste. The senses have an immediacy that we all experience and share, making them ready channels through which we can communicate and experience, hoping that others will readily grasp our meaning. They also offer an approach to other, more ineffable abstract or spiritual meanings. Thus, the visual, the oral/aural as well as smell, taste, and touch offer meaningful insights of the pilgrimage experience that allow for continuous awareness of the time and place of the pilgrimage. As way of a conclusion, I reflect on the influence of the narratives on both the narrators themselves and the listeners.

Pilgrimage as a sensory experience

Since the 1980s, several scholars have advocated for a research perspective that takes into account the role of the senses and emotions in understanding how social worlds are shaped (de Witte 2011; Meyer 2009, 2006; Howes 1991; Feld 1991, 1982; Stoller 1989). Anthropological writings on the senses initially tended to explore specific sensory domains, such as sound, taste, smell or touch (cf. Feld 1991; Stoller 1989), and critiqued the predominantly visual focus of much anthropology. However, in more recent work, the emphasis has been on the combination of different senses taking into consideration everyday practices, experiences, and communications (Howes 2003). Birgit Meyer, for example, calls for an approach that pays attention to the entanglement of a person's cognitive, visceral, and emotional appraisal in the sense-making of affective situations (Meyer 2015). Addressing the role of aesthetic and sensory experiences in the formation of religious subjectivities and communities, Meyer explains that sensational forms make the sensory involvement with, and access to, the transcendental possible:

> Sensational forms (…) are relatively fixed, authorized modes of invoking, and organizing access to the transcendental, thereby creating and sustaining links between religious practitioners in the context of particular religious organizations. Sensational forms are transmitted and shared, they involve religious practitioners in particular practices of worship and play a central role in forming religious subjects. (…) [T]he notion of 'sensational forms' can also be applied to the ways in which material religious objects – such as images, books, or buildings – address and involve beholders. Thus, reciting a holy book as the Qurʾan, praying in front of an icon, or dancing around the manifestation of a spirit are also sensational forms through which religious practitioners are made to experience the presence and power of the transcendental (Meyer 2006, 9).

In their ability to make the transcendental sensible, Meyer argues, sensational forms play a key role in constructing religious subjects and communities as "experiences of the transcendental and the ways in which they are invoked in the here and now underpin individual and collective identities" (Ibid).

The sensory experiences – as described by pilgrims – might appear to be beyond comprehension or awe-inspiring (cf. Meyer 2015). During my fieldwork, the pilgrimage was often described as an emotionally powerful experience because of the impact it could leave on the senses of both those who performed the pilgrimage and the audience that listened to their narratives and accounts. Most pilgrims tended to speak about their religious or spiritual experience by describing its effect on their bodies. For example, one pilgrim spoke about her hair standing up when she saw the Kaʿba or feeling shivers on her skin when she visited the Prophet's mosque.

Marjo Buitelaar (2015) points out the importance of understanding specific instances of Hajj performances within their wider historical and cultural contexts, each of them testifying to the Hajj as part of Islam as a living tradition. In this sense, it is important to take into consideration socio-cultural contextualization of the pilgrims in addition to the emotional affect and 'awe-filled' perspectives in their narratives. Bodily responses as well as emotional experiences evoked during the pilgrimage

do not exist separate from the more abstract meanings attributed to the pilgrimage experiences that have been structured by socio-cultural contexts (Ibid). The role of sensational forms in the construction of religious subjectivities and communities is described by Meyer with the term 'aesthetic formation'. According to Meyer, aesthetic dimensions of religion are central in generating shared sensory experiences, which are not to be seen as mere expressions of a community's beliefs and identity, as in Benedict Anderson's notion of the 'imagined community', but which are also actively involved in an on-going process of constructing or making religious subjectivities and communities:

> 'aesthetic formation' captures very well the formative impact of a shared aesthetics through which subjects are shaped by tuning their senses, inducing experiences, molding their bodies, and making sense (…) (Meyer 2009, 7)

The sensory experiences provide a framework for emotions but at the same time cultural discourses and expectations about emotions also shape the sensory experience, as I shall argue (cf. Davies 2011; Schielke 2010, 10). By looking at the sensory dimension of the pilgrimage experience, I am "emphasizing the lived and emergent nature of the senses" and "the cultural embeddedness of sensory experience" (Porcello et al. 2010, 53). I will now shift my discussion toward embodiment and the sensuous experience starting with sight, and then continuing with soundscapes, smell, taste, and touch. I start with another conversation that I witnessed between Amina and Hanan.

Sight and the pilgrimage experience

> **Amina:** The first time I went to Mecca, I could not believe that I was going to see the Kaʿba. When we approached Mecca in the bus, I asked my companion 'Where is the Kaʿba ? Where is the Kaʿba ?' He said: 'Be patient! Be patient!' I could not wait to see it.
> **Hanan:** When I saw the Kaʿba I cried and cried. I thanked God for that moment.
> **Amina:** I cried too. I cried every time I visited the Kaʿba … I used to sit facing the Kaʿba, make *duʿāʾ* prayers and thanking

> God for his blessings… I often saw the Kaʿba before going in person, but it is not the same… Seeing is different!
> **Hanan:** It is never the same; to be there is unique… The first time was different from second, and from third… But always very overwhelming…
> **Amina:** I felt like I was flying in the air! I forgot everything… I looked around at the people and places; people circling the Kaʿba... It was different… I felt […] (Sigh)
> **Hanan:** I miss those places so much… I already miss them and cannot wait to visit again…
> **Amina:** One should go there and experience it to understand [the feeling]. When you go, you will understand...

Like Amina and Hanan, pilgrims often spoke of what they saw during the pilgrimage. The sight of the Kaʿba was the most iconic for most pilgrims I met. For most, seeing the Kaʿba is a moment for which they have longed over a long period of time. Encountering the Kaʿba for the first time is among the most iconic and 'totemic' images of the pilgrimage often mentioned in Hajj narratives. A totemic object is, of course, a physical one, but one that has acquired symbolic representational and even spiritual qualities and connotations. A totem becomes a focal point, for the entire group to recognize its core significance and consequently venerate it. Thus, by using the term 'totemic' I seek to convey a spiritual relationship that pilgrims assume with the Kaʿba.[103] In my conversations with Amina, Hanan and many other pilgrims, they often expressed an intimate relationship of spirituality between themselves as pilgrims and the Kaʿba. They spoke of being granted special power around the Kaʿba and feeling its protective, even energizing, qualities.

Amina and Hanan described it as an unforgettable moment to stand in front of the cube-shaped stone structure, which is covered by a black silk *kiswa* with golden and silver embroidered calligraphy and surrounded by Muslims performing *their ṭawāf.* Hanan and Amina both mentioned how, upon seeing the Kaʿba, they were overwhelmed with emotions that brought tears to their eyes. In addition to tears, for many

[103] Spirituality in this thesis is understood as the feeling of personal connectedness with God which includes reflection or thinking about the self that would bring one closer to God (cf. Ahmad and Khan 2016).

pilgrims the sight of the Kaʿba resulted in bodily reactions, including shivering, cold skin, or instant feelings of strength. For example, Ruqayya, a pilgrim from Fes, described her experience as follows:

> My legs could not carry me anymore; my whole body refused to move. I was like a stone… I sat down, my head on the shoulder of my sister-in-law. It was as if something was going on under my skin. Then I felt something bunching my skin… It was like I was struck by energy that I could not tell where it comes from. Then I stood, I felt I was strong, and I circled the Kaʿba in full strength.

The sight of the Kaʿba had a physical impact on Ruqayya as she did not feel the usual pain in her legs when she walked. Like Ruqayya, many pilgrims spoke to me about feeling sudden strength, increased heartbeats and seeing flashes of colors, all of which reflected how one sensory experience, sight of the Kaʿba, stimulated physical responses for those pilgrims.

When Ruqayya described being pinched on her skin, she pinched my leg as a way of conveying the bodily sensation to me. I witnessed Ruqayya telling the story again to a group of female friends. When she reached this part of her story, she reached to the woman sitting to her right, pinching her leg, again to share the bodily reaction. Many Moroccans could relate to the experience of Ruqayya. At the same gathering, a female cousin confirmed Ruqayya's words. She made a comment that the Kaʿba had a special magnitude. In her words: "When I reached the Grand Mosque, it felt very bright… When we went to the Kaʿba, I felt that it has unnatural gravity and that I was attracted to it." A second cousin, commenting on the first cousin's words, joined the conversation and commented: "One would forget all their sadness and daily concerns."

When pilgrims spoke about the sight of the religious place, they often pointed out the spiritual rewards of their experience. *Al-ḥājj* Sami, an old pilgrim I met in Casablanca, told me about the importance of looking at the Kaʿba:

> God, Almighty, looks each night upon the people of earth. The first he sees are the people of the *Ḥaram*... He forgives those

> He sees circumambulating, those He sees praying, and those standing in front of the Kaʿba.[104]

Al-*ḥājj* Sami mentioned a hadith of the prophet claiming that God has put 120 blessings that descend every day on the Kaʿba and those around it: 60 blessings for those who do *ṭawāf*, 40 for those who pray and 20 blessings for those who look at the Kaʿba.[105] The mere sight of the Kaʿba, then, is believed to be a central element of the rituals for which people receive blessings. In a way, the religious texts through which pilgrims learn about religious sites are brought to life for them when they perform the pilgrimage and arguably may contribute to the construction of their experience.

The sight of the Kaʿba is both iconic for the individual and becomes a significant social experience, shared within the wider community. As in discussions of the Hajj between Ruqayya and her cousins, the pilgrimage in general, and particularly the spaces seen during the pilgrimage, were the subject of much conversation in social gatherings. For example, when people visit a pilgrim to congratulate her on her safe return, they often ask about her experience, emphasizing the importance of the sight of the Kaʿba. On several occasions, I noted that the returning pilgrim would be asked first of all by family members if she had cried when encountering the Kaʿba. Then, they would ask about the performance of the rites of Hajj. In these gatherings, those who have been to Hajj or *ʿumra* discussed their experiences, putting a lot of emphasis on what they saw. Often in social gatherings, one of those present would make a prayer that echoed Hanan's prayer of "May God never prevent anyone from [accessing] these holy places."

The importance of the visual experience is often reflected in the souvenirs and artefacts that Moroccans brought from Mecca and Medina

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[104] I traced Sami's narrative to a paragraph by al-Ghazali (1853, vol 1. 307); see also Campo (1991).

[105] A reference to this hadith can be seen in *Al-Muʿjam al-Awṣaṭ*, a hadith collection book of Ṭabarānī (1995, vol. 4, 381) Also, Azraqī in *Kitāb Akhbār Makka* [*Book of Reports about Mecca*] stated that "whoever looks at the Kaʿba with faith and belief, his sins will drop as leaves drop from a tree" (1964, vol. 2, 9).

or – less frequently – purchased locally. Images of the Kaʿba or the Grand Mosque of Mecca were displayed in almost every house that I visited in Morocco. In the house of one of the pilgrims I visited in Fes, for example, there was a large wall hanging depicting the Ka'ba and pilgrims circumambulating it. The wall hanging was at least 100 inches wide. It was a reproduction of a photo taken with a slow shutter speed, showing Muslim pilgrims circling the Kaʿba while performing *ṭawāf*. Also, in the same house, there was another framed piece of black fabric depicting the door of the Kaʿba embroidered with golden and silver thread. Framed pictures of the Grand Mosque of Mecca or the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, or both, were hung in people's places of work, bus stations, restaurants, and sweetshops in the market. These photographs captured both the strength of the personal experience and the shared community experience. Thus, we find close-ups of ecstatic pilgrims and slow-shutter shots, blurring the collective pilgrims into one unified mass, a stylistic feature which seems to me intended to convey much more than a visual impression: it attempts to capture the unifying effect, and the collective reverence and dedication felt by the pilgrims towards the Hajj.

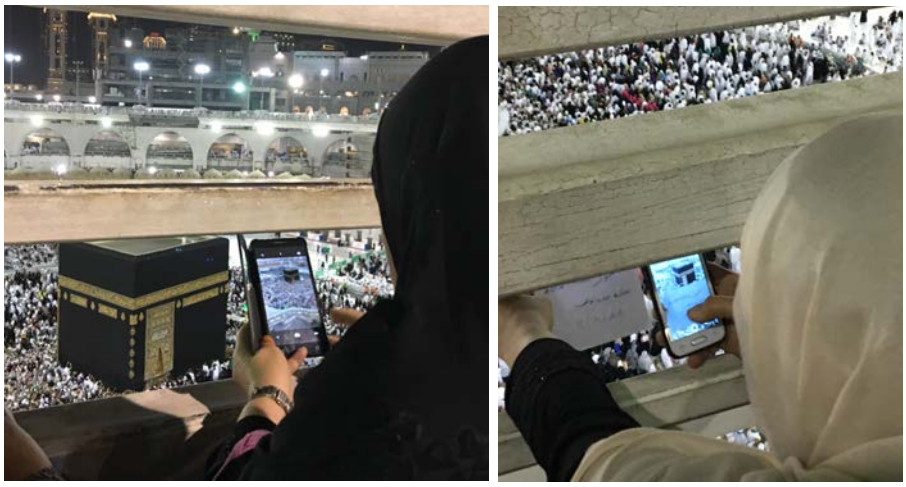

Figure 11: Pilgrims documenting and sharing their experience (Mecca, 07/02/2018)

The visual aspect of the pilgrimage was also apparent in the work of Osama, a forty-year-old artist from Casablanca who designed a wooden model of the Grand Mosque of Mecca that I found displayed in a shopping mall during my first visit to Morocco. The model occupied a large area of the ground floor of the shopping center facing the main entrance. It depicted many aspects of the mosque's structure including four of its doors, nine minarets, the Kaʿba at the mosque's center, the space of the *ṭawāf*, and the hills of Ṣafā and Marwā, where the ritual of *saʿī* is performed during the pilgrimage. At the mall, many visitors stood in front of the model, some taking pictures and others posing for pictures. A woman who came to the mall with her two daughters stopped and shared with strangers a memory of her *ʿumra* trip, assuming a collective interest in her personal pilgrimage, an assumption that was well-founded. Then, she stopped for a group picture. I found it noteworthy that in a shopping mall, a mundane space, there was such a physical and spiritual icon of religious significance which might be taken as a reference to the commercialization of the Hajj (cf. Bianchi 2004).

I contacted Osama, the designing artist behind the idea of the model, and we met shortly afterwards, on which occasion he shared the following insights:

> I think the idea imposed itself on me. Every year, I see unsuitable models of the Kaʿba that imams use in Hajj lessons at the mosque… They basically use a black box; really unsuitable… I thought then, God's House is the most important of models... I made the structure together with two friends… When I finished the design, I wanted to give it to a mosque where Hajj lessons take place; but first, I thought if I put it in the mall for a few weeks, many people would be able to see it…

Osama wanted to counter visual misrepresentations of the Kaʿba offered at local mosques. He planned to replicate his model so that in every mosque where pilgrimage lessons take place, prospective pilgrims could prepare themselves for what they would see in Mecca. Osama also told me about the reactions he had had from people who saw the model. Similar to those at the mall, many took pictures and others spoke about

the memories the sight of the model evoked in them. Khawla, a female friend of Osama who helped in the 3D digital modeling of the design, told me that before putting the model in the mall, it was placed at the entrance of their design company in Casablanca. Every day, many people would come into the company's office to see the model closely after spotting it through the glass window. She would invite people in and take their pictures with the model. Jokingly she would tell them: "…Now you have seen the Kaʿba and the mosque, touched them and took pictures with them… You do not need to go to Mecca anymore…" According to Khawla, visitors were responsive to the joke, affected and touched by the quality of the depiction of the design, sometimes sharing their emotions of longing for the holy sites and often commented that although the design was impressive, "seeing the real thing was like nothing else."

Thus, the visual dimension of the pilgrimage including seeing the Kaʿba was central in the narratives of pilgrims. Sharing the experience of what they saw, pilgrims not only evoked personal feelings and memories, but the narrative reconstructions were also a social activity that touched the senses and emotions of others. Nowadays, pilgrims can tweet, share, or post photos of their Hajj experiences whilst in Mecca and Medina (Caidi, Beazley, and Marquez 2018, 9-10). The act of sharing is significance for both the pilgrim and those at home waiting for a picture from those in the holy places.

Needless to say, the visual dimension of the pilgrimage experience and its multiple effects in the narratives of Moroccan pilgrims does not only revolve around the Kaʿba, although it is fair to say that this is a focal point. The images committed faithfully to memory extend to other sacred points associated with the Hajj, including the plain of Arafat and the Mosque of the Prophet among others (cf. Fischer and Abedi 1990; Hammoudi 2006; McLoughlin 2009; Mols and Buitelaar 2015). I will try to touch on the significance of those locations in the narratives of pilgrims in relation to other senses, in addition to sight, in the remaining parts of this chapter.

Figure 12: The scale model of the Grand Mosque of Mecca displayed in Morocco Mall (Casablanca, 30/07/2015)

Soundscapes and feelings

In the previous chapter, I showed how Moroccans refer to the performance of the Hajj as 'hearing the calling of God'. During the pilgrimage itself, different sound-environments contribute to constructing the pilgrimage experience. Foremost, vocal practices form an important element in performance of the pilgrimage rites. For example, once dressed in their *iḥrām*, all the pilgrims participate in the same sound creation process as they recite the *talbiya*:

Here I am at Your service, O Lord,	*Labbayka Allāhumma*
Here I am;	*labbayk;*
Here I am; You have no partners,	*Labbayka lā sharīka laka;*
Yours alone is all praise;	*Inna al-ḥamda,*
and all bounty;	*Wa al-niʿmata;*
Yours alone is the sovereignty;	*Laka wa-l-mulk;*
Youth have no partners.	*Lā sharīka lak.*

Pilgrims repeat the *talbiya* until they enter Mecca. According to Moroccan pilgrims with whom I spoke, the aural patterns of the *talbiya* helped in arousing or stimulating their feelings in preparation for the performance of the central elements of the pilgrimage. In addition, the sounds of pilgrims together reciting the *talbiya* was a reminder of being part of a larger Muslim community, the *umma*. This concept is of central importance and signifies to pilgrims that –although different in their looks, local and national languages, and backgrounds – they are all part of the same soundscape and collective entity as they were approaching Mecca and preparing themselves for the pilgrimage rituals. In the words of *al-ḥājj* Mousa, a pilgrim from Fes:

> People start the *talbiya* as soon as they enter their *iḥrām*. Regardless of their backgrounds or languages, they chant together… When a pilgrim raises his voice with the *talbiya,* he remembers that he has answered the call of the Almighty and that there will be another call on the Last Day, when people will be either accepted or refused, punished or rewarded, elevated or debased...

In this sense, the hearing and the aural imagination of pilgrims are key sites for creating the pious Muslim subject (cf. Schulz 2006, 2003;

Hirschkind 2001).[106] With around two and a half million people performing Hajj, sounds such as the recitation of the *talbiya* as well as other supplication prayers that pilgrims murmur, produce increased feelings of harmony and unity among pilgrims.

During the pilgrimage, pilgrims engage with other soundscapes such as the call for prayer in Mecca and Medina, Qurʾan recitations during prayers as well as collective supplication prayers made during *ṭawāf* around the Kaʿba and *saʿī* between the hills of Ṣafā and Marwā. The sounds pilgrims experience, according to many pilgrims, have a direct capacity to engage both their body and soul; the sensory experiences acquire an abstract, spiritual dimension for the pilgrims, quite unlike most day-to-day sensory experiences.

When performing the rites of Hajj, pilgrims imitate supplication prayers that they hear around them; some repeat *duʿāʾ* prayers after a leading man or from their phones, while others read *duʿāʾ*s from small booklets that they hold between their hands. Some people say their prayers aloud and others in silence while they move around the Kaʿba. In the following conversation, Hanan and Amina reflect on their emotional responses when entering the Grand Mosque of Mecca:

> **Hanan:** When Amina reached the mosque, she raised her two hands and said in a very loud voice: 'Thank you… Thank you, my lord… Thank you'.
>
> *[As she imitated Amina, Hanan stood up and raised her hands in a prayer gesture]*
>
> **Amina:** I did not feel anyone around me… I left it to my mouth to say whatever it wanted. Thank God for that…
>
> **Hanan:** You cried a lot too!
>
> **Amina:** Yes! You too! Do you remember? I cried, too.. And I thanked God, prayed, and made *duʿāʾ* prayers…

Pilgrims recite their prayers in different languages, some individually and others collectively in groups, all contributing to the production of a

[106] Charles Hirschkind (2001) argues that Islamic reform movements incorporate the use of mass reproduced cassette sermons into an 'ethics of listening', that emphasizes the importance of the ear as a key site for raising the consciousness of the pious Muslim subject (cf. Schulz 2003).

certain ambiance for pilgrims. This melding of many languages, of separate and collective voices, all raised in devout murmurings, may influence the nature and intensity of the inner experiences of the pilgrims in a strong way.

The auditory experience of pilgrims also includes communication with others during the time they spend in Mecca and Medina. Listening to different languages and dialects, for example, had the effect of making the pilgrims I talked to more aware of the diversity of the Muslim global community. Fascinated by the diversity of the languages spoken by fellow pilgrims and different dialects of Arab pilgrims coming from various countries, Hassan, a pilgrim from Safi, shared with his sister short messages that he recorded of fellow pilgrims during his *ʿumra* trip on a daily basis. In the clips which were shared with me by his sister, Fatiha, I saw pilgrims from Indonesia, Sudan, Egypt, Palestine, and Jordan greeting her in their language or local dialect and wishing her to visit Mecca. The clips were less than a minute long each, yet, Fatiha cherished them and saved them on her phone. In recording the short messages and sending them to his sister, Hassan was sharing his auditory experience beyond Mecca, an action that deeply touched his sister and stimulated her own longing for the holy places.

It is worth mentioning here that language does not often stand as a barrier between pilgrims. Pilgrims communicate through non-verbal signals, smiles, nods, frowns, and hand gestures. I saw this first-hand when my mother managed to communicate with pilgrims from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey in silence through smiles and gestures during our *ʿumra* trip. "This is the language of pilgrimage", my mother commented. This small epiphany signaled to me something important about the disposition of pilgrims: they travel in a spirit of receptivity to others sharing their journey. The social and ethnic boundaries are dissolved in a mutually understood deep connection: the quest for spiritual fulfilment.[107]

[107] Pilgrims also reported getting confused or irritated when confronted with customs of other pilgrims, particularly when in very crowded places or when

Another aural experience that influenced the pilgrims was that of engaging in ritualized communal prayers. Particularly significant in this respect is the *janāza* (funeral) prayer.[108] This prayer takes place five times a day after every mandatory prayer. For Hassan, for example, the *janāza* prayer was a constant reminder of death, that life was short and that he should be more pious in his actions and deeds.

In addition to the aural patterns in which pilgrims engage, some pilgrims related auditory experiences that were beyond the natural. For example, in a women's gathering in Fes, Ruqayya, told a group of female relatives that during her pilgrimage, she encountered the following heightened and inexplicable experience:

> I was performing my *ṭawāf* around the Kaʿba when I heard someone calling… Amina… Amina… That's the name of my daughter! I looked around trying to identify where the sound might be coming from. But everyone was performing their *ṭawāf*… Could it have been my imagination? Was it a divine call? I did not know what that meant!

The narrative Ruqayya offered brings me to an interesting distinction related to the senses that people viewed as communication with the sacred. For Ruqayya, what she heard was a key message that would haunt her thoughts for a long time afterwards. Upon asking a religious scholar in Mecca, she learned that this might be a *karāma,* an expression that means an extraordinary favor from God.[109] Ruqayya was told that the meaning of her experience was that good fortune awaits her daughter. Two years later, Amina, Ruqayya's daughter performed Hajj with her father, being the youngest in the family to do so; something that Ruqayya related back to her own seemingly extraordinary auditory experience in Mecca.

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they have to wait for a long time to perform prayers or use restrooms (cf. Aourid 2019; Hammoudi 2006).

[108] *Janāza* prayer is part of the funeral ritual in Islam (cf. Kadrouch Outmany 2016).

[109] *Karāma* (pl. *karāmāt*) refers to extraordinary favor by God towards a human, often worked by Muslim mystics and saints (cf. Gardet 2012)

Smell

Out of the five senses, Moroccan pilgrims spoke about smell the least. Although it was never in great detail, the discussion among Moroccan pilgrims about smell was limited to three subjects: the mosque's cleanliness, the unhygienic conditions in Minā, and perfumes or scents brought home as gifts. Several pilgrims commented on the cleaning process that takes place at the Grand Mosque of Mecca where they saw large groups of workers – on a daily basis – cleaning the entrances to the Mosque, bridges, minarets, and columns. Pilgrims told me that rosewater was used to perfume the passages and hallways of the mosque. A few incense burners also perfume the mosque with *bukhūr* between sunset and evening prayer while the mosque's officials perfume the Kaʿba's *kiswa* and black stone five times a day.[110] Thus, when speaking about the Grand Mosque of Mecca, pilgrims only spoke of good smells.

Unlike the cleanliness of the Grand Mosque, several pilgrims complained about their experience in Minā where piles of garbage built up during the days of the pilgrimage. Although it was a general phenomenon experienced by Moroccans, out of tens of people whom I met during my fieldwork only a few pilgrims openly complained about the phenomenon. This, however, contradicted video recordings shared by Moroccan pilgrims at Minā where many pilgrims who were interviewed – on video – complained about the hygiene standards in the tent camp. In 2015, Moroccan pilgrims even demonstrated near Minā, objecting to the situation near their tents. I would argue that the difference between the dissatisfaction and how they presented their experiences in narratives may be related to a hegemonic collective discourse in which it is mostly positive connotations that are ascribed to the pilgrimage experience. It can similarly be related to the idea that pilgrims should tolerate slight discomforts or negative experiences during the pilgrimage and should refuse to be distracted from the main focus. On the other hand, some pilgrims expressed not having had high

[110] *Bukhūr* is a blend of natural ingredients, mainly woodchips that is used as perfume or incense.

expectations of the stay in Minā and had anticipated the hygiene standards to be lower in Minā than in the hotels of Mecca. Of course, pilgrims' social backgrounds can also be a factor in differential experiences of matters such as cleanliness and hygiene issues (Kadrouch-Outmany and Buitelaar, forthcoming).[111]

The third aspect related to smell in the narratives of pilgrims was related to the gifts pilgrims brought from Mecca. Many Moroccans brought back to Morocco scented bricks, *bukhūr*, mixed with musk or agarwood, *ʿūd*.[112] Some pilgrims gave *bukhūr* to family members and friends, an action which signified the social aspect of sharing the experience with those at home. Other pilgrims, like Ruqayya, liked to burn *bukhūr* in her house, and stated that all was good, but the one which came from the holy sites was particularly so.

Taste and touch

Touch and taste are two senses that I will discuss together for two reasons; the first of which is that they both require the tactile engagement of the physical body with objects around it, with their only significant difference being the site of a bodily link, that is, either the skin or the mouth. Second, Moroccan pilgrims often spoke of more than one sensory experience that took place at the same time, particularly mentioning taste and touch simultaneously. This mentioned, however, touch and taste were sometimes emphasized separately. Especially important for the pilgrims was trying to reach and touch the Kaʿba and the black stone (Figure 13).

Pilgrims also discussed the food that was available during the pilgrimage. Since the meals were either provided in packages or prepared by pilgrims themselves, during the Hajj, comments on the food were limited to expressing a liking or disliking of the food, its flavors,

[111] See also Aourid (2019), Saad Ali (2010), and Hammoudi (2006).
[112] *ʿūd* is the Arabic name for Agarwood/Aloeswood soaked in fragrant oils and mixed with other natural ingredients (resin, ambergris, musk, sandalwood, essential oils and others).

spices or amounts. During the *ʿumra*, however, pilgrims have more time to explore food options as most meals need to be arranged by the pilgrims themselves (depending on the package bought through travel agencies). Pilgrims performing *ʿumra* in Ramadan were specifically vocal about their experience as they often shared breaking their fast at the Grand Mosque of Mecca (or in Medina). For example, Hassan, the previously mentioned pilgrim from Safi, often expressed his enjoyment in spending Ramadan in Mecca. In addition to the spiritual dimension of the experience, he explicitly enjoyed sharing food with other pilgrims. He told me about the dishes he shared with Muslims from Egypt, Palestine, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Turkey. Every sunset in the month of Ramadan (as he spent all 30 days in Mecca), he would sit with a new group of people, putting his food next to theirs, enjoying conversations during *iftār* when everyone broke their fast. He relished both the food and the interactions and, in a way, he was, literally, tasting the global Muslim community (Figure 14).

The sensory experience most talked about in relation to both taste and touch was related to Zamzam water. During the pilgrimage, pilgrims drink Zamzam water and use it to wash their hands, faces and heads in a purifying ritual. Like the reciting of the *talbiya*, drinking from the water of the well of Zamzam is considered part of the rites of the pilgrimage. During their entire time in Mecca and Medina, but especially after their *ṭawāf*, pilgrims are advised to drink Zamzam water which is consumed in large quantities.[113]

In Morocco, pilgrims often discuss the taste of Zamzam water; some saying that it is distinctive from tap or mineral water and others commenting on its ability to quench both thirst and hunger. Moroccan pilgrims – on various occasions – described to me as "pure and colorless" and "odorless," or "it has an authentic taste," "it is mildly salty" or "clean." Here is how Ruqayya put it:

[113] For example, in 2018, pilgrims consumed eight and a half million liters of water outside the pilgrimage season alone, according to a Saudi newspaper (cf. http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2018/08/16/Hajj -pilgrims-consume-8-mln-liters-of-Zamzam-water.html)

> In the Qur'an, God stated: 'We made every living thing from water'.[114] Zamzam is not just any water; it is the most sacred and miraculous water... It has [blessings]; just think of how long it has existed, and it still satisfies millions of people… And the Prophet said: 'Zamzam water is for what one intends to drink it for'.[115]

Like Ruqayya, many pilgrims emphasized the religious character of Zamzam water, as is revealed especially in the above quotation. For example, Moroccan pilgrims believed that Zamzam water possessed *baraka*, blessings or divine power from God. *Baraka* is believed to be found within physical objects, places, and people, chosen by God (cf. Eickelman 1976; Buitelaar 1993). Believing that "Zamzam water is what one intends it to be drunk for," pilgrims assume that when one drinks it to be healed, God will heal her; when one drinks it to quench her thirst, God will quench it. In this sense, the water of Zamzam is seen as something transformative, to be revered and possessing mystical unique qualities.

According to my interlocutors, the *baraka* of Zamzam water is further believed to be capable of being transmitted to those who did not personally visit Mecca for the pilgrimage. Consequently, those who visit Mecca carry some water back for relatives and friends in Morocco. When pilgrims return from Mecca, family members, neighbors and friends, visit them and congratulate them for completing the Hajj or *ʿumra.* Traditionally, visitors are then offered some Zamzam water and dates. The Moroccan etiquette of drinking it is strict: before drinking one says *bismi-llāh*, then one takes three sips, followed by saying *duʿā'* prayers. Then, on completion of the ritual, the *baraka* of the water is transmitted to the receiver. In a way, Zamzam water is considered a doorway to the spiritual or to other religious dimensions beyond the sensory.

[114] Referring to Qur'an 21:30.
[115] Referring to a saying by prophet Muhammed: "The water of Zamzam is for whatever it is drunk for" (Ibn Mājah, vol. 4, book 25, hadith 3062).

Figure 13: Pilgrims touch the Kaʿba (Mecca, 07/02/2018)

Figure 14: Pilgrims sharing *iftār* in Mecca
(picture found in Casablanca, 01/06/2018)

As was mentioned earlier, the sensory experiences were central in the narratives of Moroccan pilgrims about Hajj. The limitation of these narratives, however, might reside in the fact that time has passed between the experience itself and the narration, so that memories of the experiences may have undergone change. Therefore, I will now offer a narrative from my *ʿumra* experience in order to provide some reflections on the senses, feelings and space experienced during a pilgrimage. I will focus on the experience of pilgrims when visiting Medina, specifically at the Mosque of the Prophet.

The Rawḍa: experiencing a piece of Paradise

The heart of the Prophet's mosque in Medina houses a very special but small area named *al-rawḍa al-nabawiya* or *riyāḍ al-janna*.[116] Following a famous hadith narrated by the prophet Muhammad: "That which is between my house and my pulpit is a garden from the gardens of Paradise" (Muslim, book 15, hadith 572), many Muslims consider *al-rawḍa al-nabawiya*, or the Rawḍa – for short – as a highly significant place which they wish to visit and in which they strive to perform prayers. The Rawḍa is also where the Prophet is buried (together with Abu Bakr and Umar, the first and second caliphs). I was also told by Moroccan pilgrims that supplications uttered in the Rawḍa are never rejected. However, entrance into the Rawḍa is limited. This is especially the case for female pilgrims who are allowed only into a small section of the Rawḍa for shorter periods of time than those designated for men.

During my participant observation of the *ʿumra* in Medina, I attempted to enter the Rawḍa along with my mother and sister. I learned that the Rawḍa was open to women for two hours in the early morning and again after the *ʿishāʾ* – evening – prayers. Thus, before the *ʿishāʾ* prayers, we joined a group of women at the entry point near Gate

[116] *Riyāḍ al-janna* (the Rawḍa) is the area between what was the house of the prophet Muhammad and his pulpit. The Rawḍa is floored with green carpet just to identify it, and the entire mosque is floored with red carpet. It holds the tomb of prophet Muhammad and two of his companions and first caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattab (cf. Peters 1994, 103-5).

25 of the mosque. Inside the mosque, but still outside the Rawḍa, women were divided into groups based on the region from which they came. Also, one side was reserved for women with disabilities, which was where my sister and I stood behind our mother in her wheelchair. On my mother's right side, an old woman sat with her daughter. Later, I would learn that the woman was from Egypt. Shocked by the loss of her 19-year-old son who had drowned in a pool in upper Egypt, her daughter and husband had decided to take her on *ʿumra*, hoping that the trip would assist in healing her wounds. On my mother's left side was a young boy in another wheelchair and next to him stood his mother. The boy, suffering from autism, had been brought to the pilgrimage by his parents who hoped for blessing and healing. An old woman standing next to us kept asking her blind daughter to go to the hotel, as she was sleepy. Yet, the daughter insisted on waiting, asking her mother to be patient.

We waited about two hours in front of wooden barriers that separate the area designated for women from the Rawḍa to open. When the first gate was opened, everyone started to run. When we reached the Rawḍa, we had to stand in another line where women were allowed in small numbers as space (reserved for people with disability) housed no more than twenty women at a time, that is around 10 women with their wheelchairs and their female companions. Each group was given five minutes to pray two *rakʿas* on the assigned spot on the Rawḍa carpet, which is of the same pattern as the other carpets in the mosque, except it has a light green color instead of red. The experience was highly fragmented, interrupted by the sounds of the women, the shouts of the female guards, and the pushing of other women.

Although the women who entered the Rawḍa were able to pray there, some even adding two more *rakʿa*s or extra *duʿāʾ* prayers before being pulled out by the guards, they could not reach the tomb of the Prophet. A five-foot wall prevented the women from reaching the tomb or even seeing it. Some women tried to get a glimpse of the top part of the pulpit and the tombs. Many women tried to take photos of the part they could see; taller women were fortunate in this regard. When they reached the Rawḍa, some women started ululating as a sign of joy. Although they

were rebuked by the female guards they did not stop. "We were only expressing joy. In our country when you are happy you make trills of joy," I was told by one of the women later. The intensity of the short time women are allowed to spend at the Rawḍa made their expressions similarly intense. In addition to their ululating, many women made *duʿāʾ* prayers in a loud voice. Many women cried as they raised their hands in prayer. Some women gathered around marble pillars touching them with their hands, kissing them and, using the tip of their index finger, some women wrote the outline of their names before the female guards noticed and pushed them out.

Figure 15: Women waiting to enter the Rawḍa 8:30-10:30 pm (Medina, 01/02/2018)

The Rawḍa is a place about which Moroccan pilgrims talk extensively and with great admiration. Many Moroccan women with whom I spoke, however, expressed their resentment about not being able to see the tomb of the Prophet there. Those women, nonetheless, told me that in the Rawḍa they felt connected to the Prophet. Men, privileged by their gender, were able to see the tomb of the Prophet and often took pictures of it to share with their female relatives. The gender privilege of men, the time limitations of women's visits, and the control by guards

seemed to militate against a spiritually satisfying experience.[117] Yet the women also spoke of their spiritual elation at being in such a place. This spiritual elation was mediated by various actions including the touching of carpets and columns in the Rawḍa as the kind of "meaningful movements" (Davidson and Milligan 2004, 524). It was as if those women were seeking to leave a mark of themselves in that place.

Figure 16: Barriers in the Rawḍa separating women from the tomb of the Prophet (Medina, 02/02/2018)

My findings on this matter are reflected in other studies. In *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of Pilgrimage*, for example, Moroccan anthropologist Abdellah Hammoudi focuses on the treatment of women during the pilgrimage, as well as other restrictions on the behavior of pilgrims, when visiting the tomb of the prophet, for example, which he calls "Wahhabi virulence" (Hammoudi 2006, 80).

Male dominance in the Rawḍa not only manifests itself in that men are able to reach and see the tomb of the Prophet, but also in the significantly longer timeslots available to them to visit it, as well as the larger space they have at their disposal in the mosque even though the numbers of male and female pilgrims do not differ much. The photograph in the next page (Figure 17), for example, illustrates that men can cross

[117] Gender bias in pilgrimage is not limited to the Hajj but was noted by scholars who studied other pilgrimages as well (cf. Gemzöe 2005; Hermkens et al., 2009; Jansen and Notermans 2012). See also Chapter Eight.

the boundaries between male and female domains easier than the other way around.

Figure 17: Men drinking Zamzam water at the Grand Mosque of Mecca (Mecca, 08/02/2018)

In places with less surveillance, including Mount Arafat, Jabal al-Nūr where the cave of Ḥiraʾ is located, and Mount Uḥud, I witnessed people writing theire names and those of their family members and loved ones on the stone using pens and markers. They also wrote specific prayers for health and blessing and the date of their visit. Inscribing one's name or leaving behind messages at sacred sites can be interpreted by reference to the work of the philosopher Charles Taylor, who wrote in relation to religious experience that: "Many people are not satisfied with a momentary sense of wow! They want to take it further and they're looking for ways of doing so" (Taylor 2002, 116).[118] Arguably what is sometimes seen as destructive can be interpreted as a cry for recognition: "I was here too!"

[118] In his approach, Charles Taylor criticized William James who understood "pure experience" to be a non-reflexive, non-verbal, notion of feeling that grasps the "immediate flux of life" in terms of its undifferentiated unfolding in the field of sensory immediacy, prior to its organization into distinctive contents, forms and structures (James 2012, 58; cf. Taylor 2002; Laughlin and McManus 1995).

Figure 18: Pilgrims climbing Jabal al-Nūr (left) to reach cave of Hira (right) (Mecca, 08/02/2018)[119]

Figure 19: Inscriptions made by pilgrims in signs and stones at Mount Arafat (right) (Mecca, 08/02/2018)

[119] Jabal al-Nūr (Mount of Light) is a mountain near Mecca which houses the Grotto/Cave of Hiraʾ (*ghār ḥirāʾ*) where the prophet Muhammad is said to have spent a great deal of his time meditating. It is widely believed that it was in this cave that he received his first revelation (Peters 1994).

More generally, Hajj narratives testify to the fact that language can be an important medium for emotional expression. Retelling and representing the experience becomes something greater than a mere narrative but actually generates a spiritual quality in itself (cf. Meyer 2015). Therefore, pilgrims seek to live the experience again through the senses and the narratives through which they describe their pilgrimage. The retelling may also regenerate what they felt afresh. Furthermore, for the individual, the Hajj is, in a way, never over. Retelling its history revives it; stories fix the experience in the minds of the tellers and become a lingering legacy to be savored throughout life and passed on as a desirable occurrence to others. So those seemingly simple accounts of the Hajj have meaning and resonance far beyond their surface language. Narrations of Hajj experiences, in all their sensory diversity, become what Taylor refers to when he speaks of pilgrims wanting "to take it further" and to look for ways of preserving what is regarded as truly significant beyond the "momentary sense of 'wow!'" (Taylor 2002, 116).

In their narratives about the pilgrimage experience, the words of Moroccan pilgrims become central in describing their feelings and interaction with the religious sites and the people they encounter there. Fatima Sadiqi, who studied gender and language in Morocco, points to the importance of orality as a central component of expressing sensory experiences in everyday Moroccan speech culture. Sadiqi discusses the power of *lkelma* 'the oral word' that is attested in many deep aspects of Moroccan culture (Sadiqi 2003, 43). Orality was used to describe not only the pilgrimage experience but also feelings of longing for the holy sites and the performance of the pilgrimage.

One example of such orality was *al-ḥājja* Zahra, a woman in her seventies, who had performed the Hajj many years ago and wished to visit Mecca again. Her husband, however, did not approve of her wish. In a women's gathering at her house, I heard her whisper to a younger cousin: "I miss those places, I want to see the Kaʿba again, and to visit the Prophet… I feel fire [of longing] burning in my chest; right here [hitting her chest]." *Al-ḥājja* Zahra was clearly using references to her physical

body and her sense data metaphorically to express her longing, dramatizing her message further with sighs and tear-filled eyes.[120] *Al-ḥājja* Zahra's words evoke the argument of Davidson and Milligan (2004, 523) that the "most immediate and intimately felt geography is the body" is the space of emotional and sensuous articulation and experience. In that sense, the expression of the 'burning chest' can be a reflection of the "bodily ways of knowing" (cf. Howes1991, 3).

Bodily ways of knowing are further stimulated through the objects and souvenirs pilgrims bring home from Mecca. These concrete objects appeal to and stimulate the senses including sight (pictures and posters), hearing (audio players and *adhan* or *talbiya*-making toys), touch (prayer beads and mats), smell (perfumes and scents) and taste (Zamzam water and dates) among others. Pilgrims purchase objects that they can wear on their bodies (T-shirts, jewelry, and dresses) and use on a daily basis (such as coffee cups and key fobs) as well as house decorations and items for private collections. The sharing of tactile objects, photos, water, and souvenirs spreads the spiritual experience to those who have not performed the pilgrimage, and helps to rekindle memories in those who have. It is a cohesive agent in society.

One aspect of the sensory experience that still merits reflection is the spontaneity of these reported experiences. How are they related to collectively shared expectations of a pilgrim's behavior? How are they related to previously acquired collective knowledge and stories of previous pilgrims? And what does it indicate about a person's religiosity if she does not share the most common sensory experiences with other pilgrims? My intention here is definitely not to question the authenticity of the sensory experiences of pilgrims nor the meanings they relate to those experience, but to reflect on these aspects in relation to the pilgrimage to Mecca. In their accounts of the pilgrimage experience, many pilgrims state that crying, for example, is a sign of being stunned by what pilgrims are experiencing. How does that then reflect on those who do not cry when they see the Kaʿba, for example? If crying was typically

[120] There is more information related to Zahra's complaint to which I will return in Chapter Eight.

seen as a positive quality that reflects the longing to visit holy places, would refraining from crying be understood as a negative quality?

Expected sensations and feeling in the holy spaces

During my fieldwork in Morocco, I noticed that the expectations of the sensory experience were stimulated by four media: pilgrimage accounts (both historical and contemporary, written and oral), one's religious education, the media (both audio-visual and social media), and memories of previous experiences. All of these media are too wide and varied to be discussed in-depth here. Therefore, I will only touch on some aspects.

First, Moroccans often hear stories about the pilgrimage, including those about how people experienced Mecca and Medina, and narrations of their performance of the pilgrimage rites. There are numerous historical accounts describing the pilgrimage experience, including senses and emotions. Early travelers and pilgrims from North Africa to Mecca left accounts expressing such sensational forms, mainly in the shape of poetry and storytelling. For example, the Algerian scholar Al-Maqarrī, who visited Mecca in the sixteenth century, describes how his joy was mixed with tears when he arrived in Mecca:[121]

> When my eyes landed on the sacred house I almost fainted,
> and tears were first to fill…
> When my eye sees the truth
> And the heart is joyful with the arrival
> This is the garden of the Prophet so leave me,
> Without the people in the happy place
> Don't blame me for speaking after I die
> I only live for this moment (Al-Baqa'i 1986, 46).[122]

Similarly, travelogues of Moroccan travelers point to the emotional impact of being in Mecca. For example, Ibn Jubayr, who performed the Hajj in 1183 wrote:

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[121] Al-Maqarrī (1578-1632) was an Algerian scholar who was born in Tlemcen, and worked in Fes where he was appointed both as *mufti* and imam of the Qarawiyyin mosque (cf. al-Baqa'i 1986).
[122] From Arabic, my translation.

> The full moon has sent its light, and the night has taken its mask off, and the sounds come from everywhere carrying the *talbiya*. The tongues are busy with *duʿāʾ* prayers, praying for God's grace... It was the night of all nights... The Kaʿba was a bride, beautiful as a paradise and full of the guests of the exceedingly Compassionate…. The sight of *bayt al-Ḥarām* makes one amazed; you would not see anything apart from devout moments and tears, and tongues that are asking for God's blessings (Ibn Jubayr 1981, 65-73).[123]

Another example is the Hajj account of al-ʿAbdarī, a Moroccan pilgrim who performed the Hajj in the thirteenth century. When the signs of the city appeared, al-ʿAbdarī started composing poetry on the subject of the Prophet and of Mecca which he described as the "the best land on earth" (1999, 174). These Hajj accounts indicate that there is a long history of culturally- conditioned expectation that the pilgrimage stimulates strong emotions in pilgrims.

The conversations I have had with people about Mecca indicate that a person's education in particular (both formal and informal) is likely to inform his or her expectation of the sensory experience. In my conversations with Moroccan pilgrims, many reported that, from childhood, they have loved and longed to visit the sacred spaces in Mecca and Medina. Besides learning about the importance of the pilgrimage from their parents or grandparents many learned about it in school. Because the pilgrimage is viewed as an important religious duty, people expect that they would experience particular emotions when they encounter these holy sites. They enter these spaces with the expectation that they would be overwhelmed with emotion and that the pilgrimage will be a "once in a lifetime experience," as I was told by Ruqayya. Therefore, there is an expectation that such emotions would be expressed by poetry, tears, and overwhelming sensations.

Furthermore, the pilgrimage to Mecca is often featured in audio-visual media platforms including TV and radio. Documentaries, news reports, and TV programs often feature aspects of the pilgrimage or discuss the importance of the holy sites. Satellite TV channels, for

[123] From Arabic, my translation.

example, provide easy access to the pilgrimage. There are even two specialized channels providing podcasts all day every day from the two holy cities. Many pilgrims often watch these two channels, to listen to Qur'an recitations and see the pilgrims as they circumambulate the Kaʿba or pray at the two holy mosques.

Figure 20: Screen shots of TV channel Makkah Live (13/08/2017)

Figure 21: Screen shots of TV channel Madinah Live (12/07/2017)

Exposure to these forms of media, in addition to social media platforms where pilgrims often share images from their trips to Mecca, provide an opportunity to remember the pilgrimage, connect with those in Mecca and Medina and at the same time stimulate the feelings of longing for the holy sites. Thus, in the words of Hanan:

> Listening and seeing are different things... When one is in the moment and lives an experience, they have feelings that only they can understand, if they even can! Pilgrimage makes you experience different feelings… You have to live it, see for yourself, and experience it, in order to understand...

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reflected on the emphasis on sensory experiences and emotions in the stories of pilgrims. In their narratives, Moroccan pilgrims often provide descriptions of the places they visited, people they met, rituals they performed, and feelings they encountered which were often articulated through the senses. Yet, most of the Moroccan pilgrims I met in the course of my fieldwork would insist that the experience is beyond comprehension with words alone and that one has to go through the experience to understand the pilgrimage. A pilgrim's ability to see, listen, touch, smell, and taste at the holy places becomes part of the narratives they share and through those senses, their feelings of longing for those places, and happiness at being on the pilgrimage, among others, are also expressed.

I would argue that when Moroccan pilgrims talk about sensory experiences, their words give access to a meaning that operates at a deep level. The complexity of the sensory experiences people spoke about is closely connected to the spiritual experience of the pilgrimage. Descriptions of the pilgrimage to Mecca as the experience of a lifetime, as something that is beyond comprehension and a magical experience in the narratives of pilgrims and through the previously mentioned media, inevitably conveys something that others may wish to replicate. Having such wishes, and particularly expressing them, contributes to a socially approved idea of being a good Muslim. In a similar vein, with narrations

about strong emotions and sensory experiences, pilgrims may augment the reputation of the pilgrim as being a highly religious person. Being overwhelmed upon seeing the Kaʿba, for example, can be valuable as it could be seen to be an indication of a person's being chosen by God to visit His House – something also mentioned in the previous chapter.

For the individual, the narration of the pilgrimage experience, the Hajj is, in a way, never over. Retelling it revives it, stories fix the experience in the minds of the tellers and become a lingering legacy to be savored throughout life and passed on as a desirable experience to others. So those seemingly simple accounts of the Hajj have meaning and resonance far beyond their surface language. The experience is also socially constructed as pilgrims often spoke of sensations and emotions that are – in a way – expected. Being overwhelmed by the site of the Kaʿba, crying at the Rawḍa, feeling stronger and forgetting bodily pains, are some examples of such emotions.

For the pilgrims, many moments remain significant and seem to be held dearly in their stories, like the first moment of seeing the Kaʿba, the pilgrims standing at the plain of Arafat, the moment of the completion of the rites of Hajj, and the feelings that one's sins have been forgiven. Those moments inspire many pilgrims to decide to make a fresh start and lead a more meaningful life upon their return home.

When Moroccans perform the Hajj and return home, a new chapter of their life starts, one that is intuitively connected with their past experience in Mecca, their everyday life in Morocco and their future as *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja*. In the next chapter, I shall discuss aspects of the everyday lives of pilgrims upon returning to Morocco.

CHAPTER FOUR

After Hajj: Refashioning of the Self as *al-Ḥājj /al-Ḥājja*

> *It was narrated that the prophet Muhammad said: "An ʿumra is an expiation for the sins committed between it and the next, and Hajj which is accepted will receive no other reward than Paradise."* (hadith)[124]

Introduction

On a warm Sunday afternoon, in early October 2015, large crowds of people were strolling around the grounds of Muhammad V Airport in Casablanca: women, dressed in long colorful dresses, large groups of men standing near the exit area of the terminal, and countless children running about. Some people carried flowers and others held trays with dates and small glasses of milk. Everyone seemed to be excited and anxiously waiting for their loved ones to arrive, including the family of Abu Bakr who had left for Mecca around a month earlier.

A day earlier, just before leaving Mecca to return to Morocco, *al-ḥājj* Abu Bakr had made a prayer: "O God, I pay You farewell with my tongue, but not with my heart." He then performed his farewell *ṭawāf* and left Mecca. At the airport in Casablanca, his family waited in anticipation of his safe return. At home, food was prepared for a banquet, *walīma,* for family and friends. The living room was cleaned and scented, and plates of sweets were placed on a centrally positioned, large round table. In the kitchen, fresh mint was ready for a pot of traditional Moroccan tea and glasses were cleaned and dried. The outside of the house had been cleaned and splashed with water. The preparations taking place at home seemed akin to a purification ritual, preparing the house to welcome the

[124] *Hajj al-Mabrūr* refers to an accepted pilgrimage (cf. Muslim, book 15, hadith 493).

returning pilgrim and the many visitors who would come to the house to congratulate him on his safe return.

At the airport, one of Abu Bakr's daughters carried a tray laden with walnut-filled dates, a bottle of milk and five glasses. When Moroccan pilgrims come home, custom and tradition dictate that these are the first foods they will taste upon return.[125] The flight was an hour late, yet people waited. Then, the phone of a woman rang and after exchanging a few words, she shouted: "The airplane has landed!" Several people around her cried out "*marūk... mubārak* [Congratulations!]" and "*al-ḥamdu li-llāh* [Thank God!]" It was not until another hour that the first pilgrim emerged from the airport building; an old woman, wearing a white *jellaba* and a matching headscarf, pushing a trolley with two suitcases and clutching a box containing a five-liter bottle of Zamzam water. Around her neck the woman had a golden plastic flask, a typical souvenir in which *hājji*s also carry Zamzam water.

At the first glimpse of the returning female pilgrim, all those gathered at the arrivals area applauded. The woman raised both her arms greeting the welcoming crowd. She looked around for her relatives, who, upon recognizing her, shouted: "Here! Here… *al-ḥājja*… Welcome back… Thank God for your safe return!" Two young women ululated in honor of the arriving pilgrims. People greeted the other pilgrims who started to appear with "*mubārak* [congratulations]" and "*ʿalā slāmtik* [Thank God for your safe return]."

A young man ran to welcome an arriving pilgrim hugging her and kissing her forehead three times. Another man ran to welcome another older woman. He passed his phone to a relative and asked her: "Take a photo of me and *al-ḥājja,*" as he posed for a picture while kissing her forehead. At another corner three women, two men and several children gathered around another pilgrim in her white *jellaba*. They gave her dates to eat and she had one sip of milk which was then handed to a young man

[125] Dates and milk have different meanings depending on the occasion they are served, I learnt from Moroccans. When receiving guests, milk and dates are signs of honor and welcome; in weddings, the bride and groom share milk and dates which signify peace, happiness, and welfare.

who drank the rest. A young woman filmed the welcoming event and initiated a recitation of the words: "*ṣlāt wa-slām ʿlā rasūl Allāh; lā jāh illa jāh sayyidnā Muhammad, Allāh mʿahu jāh al-ʿalī* [prayer and peace be with the prophet of God. There is no glory but the glory of our prophet Muhammad; God, with him is the highest glory].[126] After the woman recited the first couple of words, many people in the airport picked up the rest which resulted a collective recital of this prayer, followed by a loud cheering and ululation by people in the crowd. At this point, dozens of people were ululating, crying, laughing, shouting, filming and taking group pictures as more pilgrims came out to the arrivals hall. At that moment *al-ḥājj* Abu Bakr appeared; his wife and daughters ran to greet him. They then offered him some milk to drink and posed for a group picture before leaving the airport. At home, more people would be waiting to welcome his safe return.

In a later conversation with *al-ḥājj* Abu Bakr, he used a telling image to describe the condition of those who perform a pilgrimage, saying: "[Pilgrims] now are like newborn babies: cleansed from sins and full of goodness." This state of purification is prefaced by the moral disciplines expected during Hajj itself. During Hajj, the behavior of pilgrims should be dominated by piety and morality, a time in which pilgrims abstain from all temptations and show tolerance when dealing with others and avoid disputes. However, according to *al-ḥājj* Abu Bakr's wife, once pilgrims return home, the real test begins: would they transform so fully and live up to the morals developed during Hajj? Pilgrims would be accorded the honorific title *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja*: would they live up to these titles? The social, moral and religious expectations placed on a person who has performed the Hajj are elevated above those of 'normal life'. Essentially, the expectation is that Hajj precipitates a major transformation in selfhood, a change on a spiritual and moral level

[126] Moroccans use this prayer and other versions of it in different occasions including engagement parties, weddings, birthday parties, and other celebrations. (cf. Dessing 2001, 126).

which can be traced back to the spiritual gifts associated with – and developed during – Hajj.[127]

Figure 22: Welcoming pilgrims at Mohammed V airport (Casablanca, 03/10/2015)

Figure 23: A crowd of people waiting for pilgrims' arrival outside Mohammed V airport (Casablanca, 28/09/2016)

[127] Fieldnotes, 03/10/2015

Figure 24: Pilgrims welcomed at the airport (Casablanca, 28/09/2016)

In order to address the question implicit in the minds of pilgrims and non-pilgrims alike about the transformative qualities of Hajj, one must examine in some detail what happens on return to the mundane rhythms of daily life. All major experiences have a metaphorical second life in terms of their personal, material consequences and emotional resonance and – in the case of the Hajj – their spiritual significance. Additionally, the effects may reverberate into the wider community, altering the perceptions of family and friends and perhaps adding to the collective identity of the group. Whilst much attention has been focused, quite rightly, on the deep significance of the Hajj pilgrimage itself, my research has also highlighted the ramifications of the experience, both for the individual and the community, as well as underscoring some of the more complex issues related to becoming *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja*.

In this chapter, I argue that Hajj is seen by Moroccan pilgrims as a transformative experience which, on the personal level, is meant to encourage cumulative acts of goodness that pilgrims strive to maintain and on the societal level, redefines their position within the community on the basis of the *ajr* or religious merit of being a *ḥājj*/ *ḥājja*. Religious merit, can be understood to be a form of personal capital, gained after the pilgrimage. Christopher M. Joll in his study on Muslim merit-making in Thailand refers to the Hajj as the biggest merit-making event of a lifetime (Joll 2011, 171-180). Pilgrims also believe that religious merit will help them reach Paradise in the afterlife (cf. Mahmood 2001, 835; Buitelaar 1993, 121). Nonetheless, religious merit is not automatically conferred simply by virtue of having completed the pilgrimage. To maximize spiritual benefit, pilgrims must strive to lead pious lives, honoring their new status, amidst the ambivalences, contradictions, and inconsistencies of their normal everyday lives. Although pilgrims are meant to strive to lead a morally good life, their accrued benefits of pilgrimage inevitably continue to be influenced by their wider social and cultural environments. In their everyday lives, pilgrims operate within a number of different socio-cultural settings, each with its own frames of reference, each of which can have an impact on the continuing process of merit-making (cf. Schielke 2010).

When Muslims perform the Hajj, their main motivation should be to revere the glory of God. Besides the religious reward for having concluded the obligation to perform Hajj, the pilgrimage is believed to develop in pilgrims the spiritual and moral goals of the various forms of worship in Islam, including the reformation of the pilgrim's life according to Islamic ideals. Being a *ḥājj/ ḥājja* offers a complex network of possibilities for change, contributing to shaping the religious imagination of pilgrims, their self-identity and also their daily practices, which, in turn, are influenced by social and cultural discourses as well as having a materialist dimension. (cf. Eickelman and Piscatori 1990). As in other Muslim societies, the sociocultural meaning of the performance of Hajj or *ʿumra* is embedded in contemporary Moroccan society (Hammoudi 2006). On the worldly level, there are benefits associated with increased knowledge and such benefits might impact on matters related to trade, business or other commercial benefits.

In Morocco, as in most Muslim societies, the title *al-ḥājj/ al-ḥājja* is used to address or refer to people who have concluded the pilgrimage, thus indicating the widespread conviction that the performance of Hajj has lasting effects on one's identity (cf. Tagliacozzo and Toorawa 2015).[128] This belief in the great significance of the aftermath of the Hajj for the individual and the community is illustrated in the quasi-ritualized welcoming home of pilgrims. Those who greet returning pilgrims, much like the pilgrims themselves, seem to have high expectations of the pilgrims' comportment in their daily lives after their return, whilst, at the same time, admitting a realistic sense of human imperfection.

In this chapter, I explore the putative spiritual benefits of the Hajj for people who performed it upon their return and address some of the more complex ambiguities encountered by pilgrims. I do this by making close reference to the testimonies of my interlocutors and using my own observations. I argue that the daily lives of people who, strictly speaking, should be called 'post-pilgrims' involve an array of practices to which

[128] In Morocco, title *ḥājj/ ḥājja* is often used to address older people mainly as a sign of respect regardless of whether or not the person in question has actually performed the Hajj.

pilgrims are expected to be dedicated. The very fact that people who have performed the Hajj are addressed with the honorific title *al-ḥājj/ al-ḥājja* points to expectations of how the experience must, by inference, have changed them. Once the obligation of Hajj has been fulfilled, pilgrims can turn their attention to other demands placed upon them within their daily lives. At the same time, however, pilgrims have to live up to expectations of enhanced morality and religiosity within those diurnal contexts. This enactment of what is deemed to be a correct performance of religious duties involves specific ideals or normative expectations, which are dictated by a religious authority or, alternatively, by a faith community's understanding of Islamic tradition. The pilgrims I worked with strove to become pious, virtuous, or 'correct' Muslims, as they understood that term, in a practice which ultimately becomes the continuous crafting of a religious self.

It should be emphasized that this process of crafting a religious self takes place within a context where a pilgrim's morality is both displayed and assessed in the public sphere and is not merely a matter of religious observance and private conduct. I argue that being a pilgrim is a status that Muslims generally view as a symbolic sign of morality on many levels. However, pilgrims have to negotiate their new status – and the expectations that come with being a *ḥājj/ ḥājja* – within the mundane and complex reality of everyday life. Therefore, there are many ambivalences and tensions that pilgrims have to deal with upon their return to Morocco. Also, I look at how pilgrims encounter a variety of competing expectations and demands, as well as how they shape their social and religious behavior.

In my examination of how pilgrims define ideals and norms, I analyze how fellow citizens and family members, living in proximity to pilgrims, situate those people in relation to expected religious norms and perceptions of them being *ḥājj* or *ḥājja* within the public sphere. I examine these religious norms and idealized views of the returned pilgrims, contextualizing them within the ambivalences of daily life in a range of public spheres. Finally, I discuss how pilgrims look at their pilgrimage in relation to the crafting of a religious self.

My inquiry into the crafting of a religious self takes place within a Foucauldian inquiry into how different social spaces and times produce different ideas and ideals of the subject, in relation to which the subject seeks to craft herself. Being and becoming a 'good pilgrim' for many people includes the perfection of virtuous behavior, a process which is similar to the Foucauldian concept of 'techniques of the self' (cf. Mahmood 2005; Foucault 1993). I understand the concept of 'techniques of the self' to mean the practices through which individuals seek to focus on, and change, their selfhood to attain a particular state of being (Mahmood 2005). Saba Mahmood's work, for example, demonstrates how the participants in the women's mosque movement in Egypt struggle to follow a particular ideal in order to construct themselves as religious subjects. Analogous with this, the continuous process of becoming a good Muslim for pilgrims in Morocco includes adopting behavioral patterns that are considered correct. This behavior includes specific practices through which pilgrims assert their new status, a process that resembles the Foucauldian techniques of the self which:

> permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thought, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immorality (Foucault 1988, 18).

Thus, using the above framework of analysis, I focus on how Moroccan pilgrims craft their selfhood, both individually and at the group level, where they strive to present the highest ideals possible within the context in their everyday life, a context which embraces spiritual norms and practices, but which also must address and navigate the mundane, complex and demanding realities of everyday life.

Many researchers have focused on devotional practices related to pilgrimage (cf. Sallnow 1987, 1981; Eickelman 1976). These researchers, however, give relatively little coverage to, or consideration of, what happens when the pilgrimage is over and the pilgrim returns home to his

or her everyday life. Therefore, by examining how pilgrims are 'living' Islam, I try to address this gap in the discussion (cf. Marsden 2005).

Thus far in this thesis, I have described, in narrative form, the social phenomena associated with the return of pilgrims from Hajj (as well as with the preparation) and commented on the religious and social expectations placed upon the pilgrims, framing this within a process of the crafting of a religious identity. I further contextualized this process within the religious, personal and the wider social spheres. In this chapter, I first define what I mean by the self and its construction and consider how the construction of a moral self in the everyday life of Moroccan pilgrims is related to the pilgrimage. Then, I reflect on the return of pilgrims from Mecca and how the completion of the pilgrimage is viewed as a new beginning and a quest for perfection for many Muslims. The third section deals with the ambivalences and tensions arising from the pilgrimage within the everyday life of Moroccans. The fourth section reflects on the expectations placed on a pilgrim within their personal social networks and in the wider society, scrutinizing matters related to social and cultural capital. The final section reflects on the politics of everyday life and questions of self-cultivation as a *ḥājj*/ *ḥājja*.

Selfhood: a religious ethos, its cultivation and the moral quest of a pilgrim

Many Muslims consider the pilgrimage to Mecca to be the ultimate realization of one's religious development and a way of achieving moral fulfilment or becoming a good, or better, Muslim. Morality in Muslim societies has been subject to a rich body of scholarly debate (cf. Schielke 2009; Mahmood 2005; Asad 1993; Metcalf 1984).[129] Charles Hirschkind (2006, 2001), Saba Mahmood (2005), Michael Lambek (2000), and Talal Asad (1993) have – with somewhat different emphases – argued for an anthropology of morality that focuses on the ways in which moral personhood and responsibility are created and practiced (Schielke

[129] On morality see Metcalf (1984) and Kurin (1984).

2009). Morality, for these authors, concerns the cultivation of virtues with the aim of developing a pious self and disciplining the body to develop virtuous stances and behavior (Ibid). One major criticism of this view contends that the ethnographic attention to discourses of piety and practices of morality overlooks the impact of the ambivalences and complexities of everyday life. Therefore, it carries the risk of conveying an overly simplistic, artificially coherent or monolithic image of Muslim subjectivities (cf. Schielke 2009). Like Schielke, I strive to recognize the ambivalences that are involved in the everyday practices of pilgrims, avoiding a model which irons out these essential everyday elements which people must encounter and which, in turn, contribute to their spiritual journey and development.

Studying conflicting self-ideals among Muslims, a number of scholars (for example, Osella and Soares 2010; Schielke 2009; Marsden 2005; Ewings 1990) argue that ethical self-fashioning and religious discipline are only one part of the concerns and subjectivities of individuals, and that religious sensibilities coexist with different aesthetics in people's lives. For example, Schielke has pointed out the ambivalences, frustrations and the difficulties of moral pursuit within everyday life, especially under conditions of structural tension between the requirements of religion and the expectations brought forth by exposure to the world-system, taking into account the multiple discourses and the mutable subjectivities of a person (Schielke 2009; 2008). In this perspective, discussions of how pilgrims experience everyday practices as complex, ambivalent and contradictory, are also emerging.

David Clingingsmith, Asim Ijaz Khwaja, and Michael Kremer (2009) estimate the impact of performing the Hajj on pilgrims by comparing successful and unsuccessful applicants in a lottery used in Pakistan to allocate Hajj visas. The accounts of pilgrims in their study indicated that the Hajj generates feelings of unity with fellow Muslims, increases observance of global Islamic practices, such as prayer and fasting, and increases the belief in equality and harmony among ethnic groups, in addition to fostering favorable attitudes toward women. When

asked about the impact of Hajj on their religiosity, the Moroccans I talked to gave similar responses. It must be considered, however, that the actual experience of everyday life may be significantly at variance with one's statements about it in a survey or even in an interview setting. Participant observation, by contrast, is an analytical tool which provides a clear focus on the perceived reality of the daily lives of pilgrims, their behavior, interactions, and other discourses, both personal and social.

Furthermore, becoming a pilgrim brings about different forms of theological understanding of Muslim subjecthood. When looking at theological and ethical analyses of Muslim selfhood, a number of works explore how articulations of Muslim discourses are built in relation to 'Others' (cf. Deeb 2006; Marsden 2005). These 'Others' can be secularists, adherents of other religious traditions, the State, or simply members of competing configurations within the Islamic tradition (Deeb 2006; Marsden 2005). Similarly, Fatima Sadiqi argues that within the Moroccan context the concept of self (or personhood) is constructed within the Moroccan socio-cultural context; that context is rooted in the community rather than the individual (Sadiqi 2018). Therefore, the self-image of a pilgrim is constructed within his or her socio-cultural community, where particular religiously-defined ideals of the pilgrimage to Mecca – and of those who perform it – are presented and taught. A pilgrim is often seen by the community as a person who should apply the highest ideals possible in order to achieve the ideal religious selfhood within the context of their everyday life.

With these nuances and concepts of what constitutes a religious self in mind and with an awareness of the real-life context in which the pilgrim develops that sense of selfhood, I will now consider how being a pilgrim is actually experienced and debated within one's path to piety (cf. Schielke 2010). Hence, put simply, I ask what kind of father or mother, daughter or son, brother or sister, friend, neighbor or employee does a pilgrim try to become? How is a pilgrim expected to behave in order to be considered to be a pious person?

In the next section, I discuss the meaning of pilgrimage for Moroccans and how a new pilgrim is perceived within the local socio-cultural understandings of pilgrimage and within the local religious imagination.

Return and questions of life and death

To illustrate the change that takes place in the lives of pilgrims upon their return to Morocco, I present the following vignette which emerged when I interviewed a seventy-year-old shop owner who lives in the city of Mohammedia. I visited Rashid, or *al-ḥājj* Rashid, as his friends and family refer to him, accompanied by his friend Zakariya whom I met via a mutual friend. Rashid sat behind a wooden desk and on the wall behind him hung a calendar with a photo of the Grand Mosque of Mecca. Rashid had just returned from *ʿumra*. He had been to Mecca twice before to perform the Hajj in 1988 and again in 2012.

> **Zakariya:** I am happy to see you, *al-ḥājj.* I haven't seen you since before you went for *ʿumra* last Ramadan! May God accept your *ʿumra*!
>
> **Rashid:** Amen! Those places are so sacred. Being there gives me an opportunity to find a connection with God, including a genuine desire to submit to God… Don't you want to go on Hajj yourself?
>
> **Zakariya:** Of course, I do! But you know my financial situation… I have to save to be able to go… Also, if I go later in life, then I will be ready to meet God and would commit fewer sins.
>
> **Rashid:** No one knows when the end would be; May God never prevent anyone from [accessing] these holy places.
>
> **Zakariya:** You are right. Have you seen the news about the Minā stampede? Many Moroccans passed away in Mecca. Lucky them! If a pilgrim dies in Mecca, they would be ready to meet God.
>
> **Rashid:** You remind me of someone I met when I performed Hajj in 1988. She was a very old woman. She was performing the Hajj with her son. However, that year Hajj was very difficult. It was so hot that the streets melted. I saw that with

> my own eyes. The old woman – I think she was Pakistani – was tired and sick. I spoke to her son and said: 'Why did you bring your mother? She looks very tired!' The son said that his mother insisted on coming to Mecca; *she wanted to die there*!
>
> **Zakariya:** Lucky are those who die in the holy places!
>
> **Rashid:** I prefer to think of those places as ones that I would visit and then return to my children. I want to die near my children... The real test starts when one returns home... I try to be nice and honest as much as I can; however, working with people is not easy. You have to deal with people, some you like, some you don't like…
>
> **Zakariya:** Sometimes you have to lie to people as well?
>
> **Rashid:** Yes, [I call them] white lies… In our business, we have to deal with people on a daily basis which is not easy…

The conversation that took place between Rashid and Zakariya offers insights into the significance of the pilgrimage in relation to one's life and death. Traditionally, some Moroccans express the view that the optimum time to undertake the pilgrimage is towards late middle age, when a person can be expected to have already honored all other commitments. The pilgrimage to Mecca, from this perspective, is seen as a person's last significant act in preparation for dying. Having fulfilled all obligations at home, the pilgrim could depart for Mecca with a clear conscience and there be cleansed of all their other sins before death. Thus, it is common – as with Muslims in many other parts of the world – that some returning pilgrims bring with them the *iḥrām* which they wore in Mecca, so that they can use these two plain white sheets as their shroud (cf. Peters 1994). In this view the Hajj is understood principally as signaling the end of material existence, and the expectation is that a returned pilgrim will be prepared for death and of a mind to behave accordingly.

Closely linked to this idea are Moroccan attitudes related to the possibility of dying in Mecca, especially to dying after the completion of the Hajj rites. In the story of the Pakistani pilgrim, Rashid understood why the woman had wanted to die after Hajj: "Sinless and ready to meet God," as he explained. Moreover, when the Minā stampede of 2015 took place, causing deaths estimated at well over 2,000 pilgrims, 42 of whom

were Moroccans, some people saw the disastrous event in a positive manner.[130] I heard Zakariya and other Moroccans say: *"saʿdāthum*!" which can be translated to 'How happy they must be!' or 'Lucky them!' which, in Morocco, is a clear expression of envy of those whose death took place at the optimal spiritual moment, even if it is in such a tragic context. Rashid, however, did not wish to die in Mecca. He – and many other Moroccans – preferred to die in their own homes. Nonetheless, Rashid recognized the spiritual imperative of asking for forgiveness for violations against others and for sins that one has committed over the years. He explained:

> Pilgrimage is an opportunity to cleanse oneself from sins… When one returns home, it is like being a newborn… it is an opportunity for a new way of life and a renewed faith [*īmān*].

Provided that the pilgrimage has been performed correctly and with honest intentions, as Rashid – and earlier Abu Bakr – said: "a pilgrim returns free of sin and as clean as a newborn baby." Therefore, as noted earlier, images of birth and rebirth are common and, through them, Moroccans express what they feel to be the central aim of the pilgrimage, especially those who approach old age. In this sense, the Hajj, as a rite of passage, marks the transition to a new life cleansed from sins that starts upon return from the pilgrimage (cf. Werbner 2003).

Like Rashid, Abu Bakr told me that he too had wished to return to his wife and children. Before leaving Mecca, he said prayers to God to strengthen his faith and asked for stability, *thabāt*, in the context of the new status he would acquire.[131] Asking God for qualities such as stability and fortitude is something that dying persons often do. The dying person

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[130] On 24 September 2015, an event described as a crush and stampede caused deaths estimated at over 2,000 pilgrims, suffocated or crushed in Minā. The accident was widely covered by Moroccan and international press (cf. https://apnews.com/3a42a7733a8b476889bb4b7b3be3560e/ap-count-over-2400-killed-saudi-hajj-stampede-crush).

[131] *Thabāt* means stability or constancy. It is considered a quality of the Muslim in belief, worship, and morals. This stability can be seen in terms of belief in God and constancy of performing rituals like prayer and fasting, and following the teachings of Qur'an and those of prophet Muhammad (cf. Abu-Rabiʿ 1996, 150).

traditionally asks God to strengthen his or her faith in order to be able to answer the questions of the angels in the grave and to enter Paradise.[132]

Furthermore, the idea of completing one's faith, in an act of total consummation, is central to the performance of the Hajj. The idea itself is linked with the belief that a Muslim should complete the five pillars of Islam if capable. The Five Pillars of Islam – the profession of faith, performing daily prayer, almsgiving, fasting during the month Ramadan, and the Hajj – are considered the foundation of one's faith. Pilgrims themselves often describe their experience of pilgrimage within these parameters and talk about the pilgrimage in terms of changed internal states. In the words of Abu Bakr:

> One's faith is complete [when Hajj is performed] in keeping with the words of the Almighty, 'This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you, Islam as your religion'[133]

The ideas of rebirth and purification are central to the spiritual transformation which the returning pilgrim hopes to undergo. Many Moroccans spoke to me about expectations that those who have been to Mecca come back spiritually rejuvenated, displaying a new enthusiasm for a religious life upon return home. In the words of one Moroccan woman I met: "When pilgrims return from Hajj, they come back a blank sheet of paper… They should be careful what to write on that sheet…" The image of the pilgrim as a *tabula rasa* suggests that all past misdeeds are obliterated, purged and forgiven, so that the returned pilgrims begin their spiritual journey again, with no sins weighing them down.

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[132] The testimony of faith or *shahāda* is an aspect of Islamic creed. It is one of the pillars of Islam in which a Muslim declares belief in the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's Prophet. In Muslim tradition, it is believed that after a person dies, his soul passes through a stage called *barzakh*, where it exists in the grave. A dead person is then questioned by two angels, who ask about a person's belief. A righteous Muslim is believed to respond by saying that their Lord is God, that Muhammad is their Prophet and that their religion is Islam. The deed of holding to this test is referred to as *thabāt*, endurance or stability (cf. Coward 1997).

[133] Quoted from Qurʾan 5: 3. It is been said that the verse was revealed during the farewell pilgrimage on the Day of Arafat (cf. Al-Bukhārī, book 64, hadith 429).

Pilgrims try to protect and preserve their new spiritual state of purity whilst, at the same time, navigating their daily lives and interactions with others. Here, the 'performance of piety' can be observed in operation. The word 'performance' is related to external factors that are visible and can, as a result, be assessed and evaluated. This is not to suggest that there is any insincerity in the performance of piety, but it may be that the returned pilgrim feels impelled to demonstrate the spiritual benefits of the Hajj through external speech markers and behavioral characteristics which connote devotion. Society may expect to perceive the outward signs of inward change. In the next section, I reflect on these expectations in relation to the daily lives and experiences of pilgrims.

A new person? A pilgrim's religious and social life after Hajj

According to Rashid, when they return home, pilgrims focus on having the 'correct' character traits, deemed by tradition to be associated with a good pilgrimage, a topic that recurred frequently in discussions of pilgrimage with Moroccans. In conversations related to the Hajj, Moroccans often focused on describing what is expected of a pilgrim, both in terms of external behavior and interior expressions of piety. Interior piety is largely linked to the idea of cultivating, and having cultivated, the sense of a close relationship with God, a feeling highly prized by pilgrims. Upon return from Hajj, many pilgrims manifested a desire to achieve closer proximity to God, an inner state achievable through the devout performance of religious duties.

This was illustrated in my interactions with pilgrims in Morocco, when I asked what, if anything, had changed in their lives since returning from Hajj. First, those returning to Morocco after performing the Hajj told me that the pilgrimage resulted in transformations that were manifested in behavior related to religious rituals, most notably in the realm of prayer and other kinds of religious activity. According to Samiya, a pilgrim in her sixties from Fes:

> Before going on Hajj, I used to pay less attention to my religious duties… I could not wake up for *fajr* prayers [at dawn], for example, and rarely fasted outside of the month of Ramadan… Now, I make sure to pray on time, wake up for *fajr* prayers, fast regularly and help others… A pilgrim should never lie, should not cheat, and should be a good neighbor… [A pilgrim] should stay on the right path [*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*]…

From the pilgrims that I came to know in Morocco, I understood that there have been recognized efforts to mandate certain forms of Islamic piety following the pilgrimage to Mecca. For example, a working knowledge of Muslim practices and rituals, participation in group prayers, and regular reading of the Qur'an are seen as important, and expected, routines in the daily lives of pilgrims. Although such practices are expected of pious Muslims in general and not necessarily only of those who performed Hajj, for people returning from pilgrimage these matters acquire an even greater insistence; an obligatory zeal informs their desire and practices to cultivate moral selves and lead devout lives.

Pilgrims generally strive towards what they consider to be a pattern of Islamic perfection. Although they may oscillate between this ideal and the realities of daily life (cf. Beekers and Kloos 2017; Ahmed 1988; Robinson 1986), observable evidence suggests that they try to be faithful to their pilgrimage, and "stay on *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* [the straight path]," to quote the words of Samiya.[134] Furthermore, the daily lives of Muslims involve an array of religious obligations, regardless of whether the person has completed Hajj. But for the pilgrim, these devotional rituals acquire new resonance. For example, as asserted by Samiya, prayers are an important part of a pilgrim's daily routine; the morning prayer is a central focus in the schedule of waking and preparing for

[134] *Al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* or the straight path is mentioned in the opening chapter of the Qur'an in the form of a supplication prayer from humans to God: "Guide us to the straight path: the path of those You have blessed, those who incur no anger and who have not gone astray" (Qur'an 1, 6-7). Historian Michael Cook notes that *ṣirāṭ* in Arabic is only ever used in a religious context. Also it has no plural form indicating that there can be only one *ṣirāṭ* which is living through the way to God (Cook 2000, 25).

work. Pilgrims take on additional daily prayers and religious obligations, including voluntary fasting and reciting the Qur'an. In general, pilgrims assert a conscious belief that that they have become more mindful of religion in their daily life.

For many pilgrims, becoming a pilgrim was largely about the development of a new moral self, one that differentiates more closely than before between what is good and bad, right and wrong, sacred and profane, in their everyday lives. The transformation pilgrims speak about is most notably related to religious activities such as prayer and fasting. Yet, this new zeal can be heard in daily speech, with pilgrims intensifying their use of religious interjections, such as *in-shā'-Allāh* [God willing] and *mā-shā'-Allāh* [God has willed it] which they were widely use in their daily conversations (cf. Migdadi, Badarneh, and Momani 2010).[135] Whilst one might argue that such interjections are a minor act of prayer, they serve to indicate a prevailing disposition to think, speak and act within a religious framework. Pilgrims also exhibit a determination to perform other acts, including extending hospitality and giving alms to the poor. Other aspects of external behavior, operating on a lower level but nonetheless having great significance for pilgrims included smiling, being kind to others, solving disputes, and adopting a positive demeanor in public. Such conduct is not exclusively the province of the devout, but pilgrims seemed to see it as a daily manifestation of spiritual grace acquired, or intensified, during Hajj.

As indicated in Chapter Two, before leaving for Hajj, pilgrims visit family members and friends to ask for forgiveness and bid farewell. This is a tradition observed in Morocco for centuries, not least because those who left for Hajj might not return. Therefore, upon return, many pilgrims felt the need to improve their social image, and arguably their social status, through their behavior as an individual. Many pilgrims organize and participate in a variety of religious gatherings including collective recitations of parts of the Qur'an. In addition, many pilgrims are invited as witnesses to marriages and to act as judges in cases of dispute. The

[135] Both *in-shā'-Allāh* and *mā-shā'-Allāh* refer to that what God wishes can come true (Migdadi, Badarneh, and Momani 2010).

opinions and ideas of pilgrims are highly respected in the community. I witnessed occasions when a person would ask a pilgrim to perform *duʿāʾ* prayers on his or her behalf. I sought an explanation for this on one occasion and I was told that, since pilgrims are believed to be closer to God, their prayers have special *baraka*, blessings. Thus, there is an acquired religious – and indeed social – status attached to having made the pilgrimage to Mecca. The returning pilgrim may relish this status and the desire to maintain that status, in turn, might enhance the desire to exhibit greater piety.

The manifestation of piety is very much achieved through participating in family and community life, attending prayers in the mosque and adopting the name *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja*. In the next section, I discuss the significance of naming and public expressions of religiosity for pilgrims in Morocco.

Social capital and a 'new status': expressions of public religiosity

The significance of having undertaken the Hajj for Moroccans is determined not only by the fact that it is one of Islam's five pillars, but by a range of factors which include local values, the web of relationships in which they are embedded, and the social expectations of pilgrims. Most notably, there is a change in a pilgrim's social status, indicated both by the manner in which the pilgrim should now behave, as well as by the deference which others should show them (cf. Donnan 1989). In Morocco, the honorific title of *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja* carries social significance in the sense that the community expects a pilgrim to be respected and honored. The significance of the title may be explained in the words of Nisrin, a young Moroccan woman, whom I met in Casablanca. Nisrin used to address one friend of her mother as *khāltī,* a term that means maternal aunt but is applied – as a mark of respect – to other older women. However, when this woman returned from Hajj she demanded to be addressed differently. In Nisrin's words:

> *Khāltī*, a friend of my mother went on Hajj last year. When she returned we visited her and I said: 'Congratulations on your

> Hajj, *khāltī*'. The woman looked at me and said: 'Don't call me *khāltī* anymore! Instead, call me *al-ḥājja*!'

As was mentioned before, those who complete the Hajj are entitled to use the honorific *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja* as a prefix to their name, further emphasizing their identity and status as a person who has performed this religious duty. Nisrins's aunt clearly wanted deferential recognition for her status, a recognition which superseded her previous form of address. It was clear to Nisrin that the friend of her mother was seeking social recognition for religious merit, pursuing prestige rather than spiritual recognition.[136] More than once, I was told, the aunt called attention to her pilgrimage, by bringing the topic up when she visited relatives; for example, when she made reference to the cold weather, she insisted on comparing it with the dry heat of Mecca during her pilgrimage.

The prestige of the title – *al-ḥājja*/ *al-ḥājja* – in days past hinged on its relative rarity. At the time, the trip to Mecca was perilous, arduous, costly and often long. While the Hajj is prescribed as obligatory to those who are physically and financially able to afford it, in years past, relatively few Muslims performed it. All these factors made the Hajj a rare ideal attainable only to a few people and rendered its completion a significant achievement (cf. Scupin 1982). Therefore, those who had successfully completed the Hajj acquired a higher social status in their home communities in addition to significant honor and prestige that came with the title *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja*.

More recently, matters have changed. As a result of the fact that more people are nowadays financially able to perform the Hajj (despite difficulties and restrictions such as the quota system and visas), the prestige linked to the title *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja* has somewhat diminished. Nisrin, and many other Moroccans, questioned the automatic use of the title for those who performed the Hajj. When I asked Nisrin if she called her aunt by the title *al-ḥājja*, she answered: "*Allāh yismaḥli* [May God forgive me], but when I see her, I call her *khāltī* on purpose… I can see it on her face that she does not like it!" The fact that Nisrin began her

[136] For more information on Moroccan women's experience of the Hajj, see Chapter Seven.

answer with *Allāh yismaḥli*, however, was an indication that she believed her behavior towards her mother's friend might not be appropriate, considering the latter's age and social status as a female pilgrim. To some extent, being recognized as a pilgrim still carries high social significance among Moroccans, although the greater frequency of completion of the Hajj has introduced a modern ambivalence to the title, albeit a relatively muted one.

When Moroccans discuss the issue of ascribing high status to pilgrims, many people draw a clear distinction between religion, culture and tradition. Abu Bakr, for example, questioned the established practice of automatically giving titles to pilgrims in Morocco. For him, the practice of naming is more of a cultural than religious practice. Upon asking him about the title *al-ḥājj* by which he is known, he commented:

> When the Prophet performed the Hajj in Mecca, no one called him *al-ḥājj* Muhammad. His companions also performed the Hajj. But no one says *al-ḥājj* Ali, *al-ḥājj* Umar or *al-ḥājj* Uthman… Those were the leaders of the Muslim community; yet none of them was called *al-ḥājj*.

The reason a person should perform pilgrimage, according to Abu Bakr, is simply that God commands pilgrimage, and, therefore, it is not obligatory to be given the title *al-ḥājj* upon their return from Mecca. Rashid expressed a similar view:

> When someone prays, he performs an obligation. Yet, he would not be called *al-muṣallī* [the one who prays]. When he fasts, he performs an obligation, yet he would not be given the title of *al-ṣāʾim* [the one who fasts]. Pilgrimage is the same; it is an obligation and those who perform it are lucky and hopefully God accepts their pilgrimage; but there is no need for them to be called *al-ḥājj*.

Thus, both Abu Bakr and Rashid believed that it was a decision made by the community to confer upon them the honorific title of one who has completed the Hajj and it was not something the pilgrims themselves should ask for (cf. Buitelaar 2018). Abu Bakr, for example, once told me:

> I did not ask people to call me *al-ḥājj*. However, everyone started calling me *al-ḥājj* upon return from Mecca… Now, my

> work colleagues, my family members, my cousins, and neighbors all call me *al-ḥājj*.

As illustrated earlier, like Nisrin's aunt, some pilgrims directly expect and even request others to refer to them as *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja* upon their return from Mecca. They assume an automatic entitlement to an honorific title on their return. This, however, does not mean that a person receives respect and social status simply because they have been to Mecca. In fact, the family of the pilgrim actively assess the behaviors and religious conduct of the returned pilgrim. They assess the changes which have occurred, perhaps not consciously, but such is the expectation of transformation that people are attuned to. From what I observed in my fieldwork, it could well be the case that usage of, and attitudes to, these honorifics is changing, in direct relationship to changed social conditions, as I will illustrate in the next section. The following discussion illustrates, through one case study, how being a pilgrim affects the perception of that person within a family context: the case relates to Abu Bakr and his wife Najla.

Flaws in perfection: the ambivalences of everyday life

> When my husband returned from Hajj, I believed that he was a new person: that he would transform; a person who is cleansed from his sins. I wondered: 'can he live a life without sins? Will he live up to his new life as a pilgrim? Will he live up to his new title, al-ḥājj?'

Najla said these words as her daughter, Yusra, and I were looking at some pictures which documented the father's pilgrimage journey which took place two years earlier. With every picture, the mother and daughter narrated what they remembered about Abu Bakr's pilgrimage experience. They told me about the application process, preparations for the journey, and his departure. Several hundred pictures were saved in a special folder on the daughter's computer, downloaded from the father's phone, documenting his journey in Mecca and Medina. Several family pictures were taken at the airport, recording his departure and safe return. Other pictures were of friends and neighbors, who were

welcomed at the house for many days celebrating the new pilgrim, bringing boxes of sugar and leaving with gifts from Mecca including dates, *bukhūr* and Zamzam water.

As already mentioned in Chapter Two, it is the custom in Morocco for those leaving on Hajj to settle their disputes, pay their debts and ask forgiveness from family and friends before they leave on their Hajj journey. Remembering her husband's departure for Hajj, Najla commented:

> Before he left for Mecca, at the airport, he cried and asked for forgiveness for every moment of anger and every unjust action during our life together… I felt like he was paying the last farewell. I felt that he would not return and wanted to be cleansed from his sins before meeting God… We all cried and to myself I thought that he would return as *al-ḥājj,* a completely new person!

In Morocco, Najla prepared for husband's return and wondered what changes she would witness in her *al-ḥājj* husband once he had returned home. Najla dscribed here husband – upon his return from Hajj – as the kindest she had ever known him. "How long do you think that lasted?" Najla asked me. She then answered her own question: "Three months!." Describing the change in his behavior, Najla remembered clearly the words of her husband upon his return from Mecca:

> He told me that being on Hajj reminded him of the Prophet, especially of the deeds of the Prophet who was a gentle man, a kind and a loving husband, and a good father and neighbor… [My husband] wanted to be a loving husband just like the Prophet… And he was! He was the perfect husband; never angry, always smiling and speaking nicely and gently… For three months! After three months, he returned to his old self… He is not a bad person, but he easily gets angry, screams, and gets irritated often… I have to say, those three months [immediately following his return] were the best months of our twenty-five years of marriage…

In the three months that followed her husband's return from Mecca, Najla recognized him as "truly *al-ḥājj*," as one who was spiritually transformed. The husband worked to demonstrate piety and reverence and by evincing qualities such as open-mindedness and readiness to be a good

husband. This change is a state largely brought about through the pilgrim's own efforts. However, the transformation, in this case, was not held to be permanent, revealing that the experience of pilgrimage alone is considered insufficient, of itself, to bring about a total and lasting change.

The life of pilgrims after Hajj reflects the reality that moral selfhood remains a compelling struggle for people because of the complex and contradictory sources from which selfhood is built and because of the contradictory demands placed on the self in the course of simply living. For Najla, some people appear not to have internalized (Spiro 1997, 3) the moral status of pilgrimage deeply enough, with the result that they find it difficult to sustain their desired transformation following their return to their daily lives after the pilgrimage. As noted by Najla, the new moral status, acquired after pilgrimage, becomes a site of struggle for the returning pilgrim, a fact observed within the family, and evaluated by those closest to the pilgrim. Rashid expressed this dilemma clearly when he told me:

> When people go on Hajj and return, their behavior might change between themselves and God with more prayer, fasting and almsgiving. However, what is between themselves and people might not change a lot… We are just humans; they might return to treat people badly, cheat, or gossip… [That's part of] a human's daily life!

According to Najla:

> Some people are different after they go on Hajj; others return the same as they were before… They may be called *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja*… When you hear these names, you would think they are good people… However, only God knows the interior of a person and the hearts of people.

Significantly, some people remain adamant that for returning pilgrims who do not behave in a manner befitting one who has been to Mecca, it would have been better not to make the pilgrimage in the first place. Indeed, for some, such people stand diminished both spiritually and personally in the eyes of their fellows. Samar was one of many Moroccan

interlocutors who told me of such dilemmas related to daily life after pilgrimage:

> It becomes difficult when pilgrims return…They think they should be good; they should never cheat; they should not talk about any person or gossip; these things become very important. But it is hard to keep these good deeds in practice!

For many Moroccans a good pilgrim is a person who fully and comprehensively applies the teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet's instruction for moral action (cf. Schielke 2009). This idea, however, is very complex and does not mean that people can actually live in this way, and therein lie the ambiguous consequences of the ideals of religious expectations. As Najla put it: "At the end of the day, a pilgrim is only human; humans do the right and the wrong. They might try not to, but it is difficult." Thus, the benefits of pilgrimage in terms of their legacy are held to be equivocal. The honorific title rings hollow when the transformation expected seems unfulfilled and members of the community are reluctant to ascribe the title to flawed individuals. Additionally, the returning pilgrim can be viewed and evaluated through the lens of religious, social and personal expectations ascribed to those who complete pilgrimage, effectively demanding higher standards of them than of others.

However, these judgements are not universally shared; as illustrated by Samar's view here above; some take a more nuanced perspective regarding expectations of pilgrims on return from Hajj. In this alternative view, there is a recognition that to fail and err is human; people holding this view consequently moderate their expectations of pilgrims.

Straying from the right path

It is, of course, pilgrims themselves who have to deal with their own sense of failure. They may provide different explanations for the change, or lack of change, in themselves after Hajj. Rashid, for example, told me that he believed that one's character does not significantly change after Hajj but that the outcome of Hajj depends on one's upbringing, *tarbiya*. He

optimistically estimated that 90 percent of Moroccans change positively after Hajj and try to follow the straight path. He insisted that, although a pilgrim might return to his old habits, the change in his or her heart would remain consistent after Hajj. In his words: "after Hajj, a pilgrim's heart is filled with faith [*yiʿmar bil-īmān*]."

Some pilgrims manage to find consolation and spiritual encouragement despite their failure to remain committed to new ideals upon their return to Morocco. One challenge with which pilgrims must grapple is related to the ongoing, and prolonged, process of religious self-formation. For example, pilgrims describe the logistical difficulties they faced whilst attempting to carve out time for practices of worship against the competing backdrop of the rhythms and routines that shaped their everyday lives. Pilgrims simply face an organizational challenge in trying to allocate more time for prayers and voluntary fasting, let alone the greater difficulty of revisiting Mecca for the purpose of *ʿumra* following their pilgrimage.

Other pilgrims insisted that in a Muslim's life, there are always pathways for ethical improvement which exist independent of Hajj. Thus, the pilgrimage to Mecca is not the end of that improvement but rather a step, and for some, even a beginning. There seemed to be a shared ethical mode among pilgrims that enabled my interlocutors to see their moral shortcomings as an opportunity for learning from experience rather than as occasions of sin which damage their personal religious development. For example, in an interview with Abu Bakr, he reflected on his experience upon return to Morocco after performing the Hajj:

> Over there [in Mecca] you're occupied with worship and think that you would lead a pious life once you return home.... And then you come here, you have to go to work again, deal with people on a daily basis, sometimes you have no time… At first when you come back you are still in that mood; but with daily busy life, you return to the routine.

What Abu Bakr felt was coherent with his wife's description of the change in his character following his pilgrimage. His return to the rhythms of everyday life were less shaped by the effects of a spiritual transformation

brought about by the pilgrimage than by the routines of work, family, and social life. Other interlocutors shared the sense that their lives were so packed with activities and events, rapidly succeeding one another, that there was often little time left to practise their faith. Even more, they often felt that worship-related practices were unwittingly pushed to the margins of their everyday lives. While they may have aspired to consistently draw closer to God, they found it hard to realize this in their busy everyday lives.

Beekers and Kloos (2017) reflect on the dialectical relationship between the pursuit of religious adherence on the one hand and the experience of moral fragmentation on the other; they do this by focusing on self-perceived senses of failure. They argue that experiences of a sense of failure offer an important and productive entry point for the study of lived religion in today's world, a world in which religious commitments are often volatile, and where believers are regularly confronted by alternative lifestyles, worldviews or desires, as they strive to become self-reflexive religious subjects. The acknowledgement of moral failure, they argue, is part of the formation of one's ethical compass, for Christians and Muslims alike. This theoretical perspective can be evidenced in the relationship that pilgrims have with the challenges of their everyday lives, as they strive to live moral lives following their pilgrimage.

In the same volume, Martijn de Koning suggests that the sense of a "state of weakness" that a Muslim faces is part of that person's "self-fashioning" as a pious Muslim (2017, 48). Also in the same volume, Thijl Sunier asserts that *failure* and *virtue* are ambiguous, semantic categories subject to debate and contestation (Sunier 2017, 113).

Taking the points that Kloos and Beekers, de Koning and Sunier make one step further, it could be argued that explicitly acknowledging one's sense of failure can be a 'technique of the self' in the sense of formulating and rechanneling that sense of failure as a learning moment. Reflecting upon and 'testifying' about such moments thus actually contributes to and stimulates one's development and enhances the

presentation of a religious self (Buitelaar 2019).[137] For example, although pilgrims admitted failure in the performance of humility, they continued to talk about this very failure as an avenue to a more reflective state of mind, a fact which they often vocalized. In other words, recognizing and responding to one's lack of capacity to realize certain ideals becomes a mode of self-cultivation.

Serious attempts to persist in developing a pious self-formation are evidenced by many of the pilgrims with whom I talked, as they described daily activities that would remind them of their post-pilgrimage status and enhance their feelings of being close to God. For example, prayer played a central role in this regard. Most pilgrims performed prayers five times a day (within set time intervals) either individually or in a group. Another significant feature of the demeanor of pilgrims is that they try, if they are able and where possible, to return to Mecca again for *ʿumra.* Several pilgrims among my interlocutors performed *ʿumra* once a year following their Hajj, a not inconsiderable investment in time and resources. However, the business of everyday life made my interlocutors aware that their religious endeavors were perpetually incomplete projects that required ongoing work and investment of time, attention and spiritual energy. Their practices of worship were part and parcel of such ongoing, forever imperfect, moral and spiritual work on the self, aimed at becoming closer to God. In that way, the pilgrimage, and its aftermath, constituted an attempt at coming to terms with self-perceived imperfections and inadequacies, without ever fully resolving them.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed how pilgrims relate to a particular religious ethos that they are expected to embrace, negotiate, and practise within the social spaces they inhabit. The main focus was on how religious discursive practices and ideals operate in the everyday lives of pilgrims, and how these practices are incorporated into the crafting of a

[137] Buitelaar, personal communication (15/10/2019).

religious self that matches the aspirations associated with a new honorific.

On the basis of my observations and conversations with Moroccans, both pilgrims and their family members, friends and other non-pilgrims, it became clear that pilgrims, just like everybody else, live their everyday lives laden with ambiguities and contradictions. There are several contradictions between, on the one hand, how a pilgrim is expected to behave in a religious moral register and, on the other, the reality of his or her actual behavior and daily interactions with others. Furthermore, as a major event in the lives of Muslims, the Hajj does not only affect the millions of pilgrims who actually make the journey, but also their friends and relatives who vicariously experience the occasion through them. Not only that, but those people, connected by many bonds with the returned pilgrims, refresh their expectations and hopes of their pilgrim contacts, in line with the benefits and changes supposedly endowed on the *ḥājj or ḥājja* after the completion of the pilgrimage. Therefore, the relationships between pilgrims and their social networks after the Hajj are likely to change, in complex and varied ways, based on their new religious and social status.

While Moroccans recognize that pilgrimage to Mecca can have certain transformative properties, enabling returning pilgrims to pursue a more spiritual life and leading them to a better understanding of Islam, they do not always consider the outcome to be perfect or lasting. Thus, my research reveals that the construction of a virtuous self and religious persona is far from straightforward. Despite the aspirations and manifestly sincere efforts made by returned pilgrims, there was a general realization that the performance of the Hajj is no guarantee, per se, of a life transformation and an elevation to a higher religious standard. The process is not simply an individual enterprise with a guaranteed outcome.

The hadith at the start of this chapter states that "An *ʿumra* is an expiation for the sins committed between it and the next, and the Hajj which is accepted will receive no other reward than Paradise." (Muslim, book 15, hadith 493). According to this hadith, Hajj gives access to

Paradise; that is, eternal religious bliss and perfection. Yet it seems, from the research, that the lived experiences of pilgrims are rather marked with complexities and ambiguities– all of which are rooted in human imperfection and conditioned by the social context in which pilgrims live.

If piety, religious self-fashioning, and conviction constitute one aspect of what pilgrims strive to achieve, then imperfection, uncertainty, and ambivalence are undeniably competing elements of the everyday lives they live. Self-perceived failure is, in many cases, part and parcel of religious practice and experience. Arguably, to navigate, or negotiate, the complexities of life as it is lived, whilst still maintaining a sense of striving for spiritual improvement, is a laudable religious pathway. To accept human frailty and yet sustain a religious endeavor, even if not perfectly realized, could provoke a sense of failure which might, in turn, militate against that sustained religious practice. The recognition that spiritual 'improvement' is the target, rather than perfection, allows pilgrims to embrace the facts of daily life as they find them.

To conclude, the perfection offered by the hadith, referred to earlier, is perhaps being replaced in contemporary religious sensibilities by an acknowledgement of a more realistic, yet still spiritually admirable, sense of struggle. Such findings make one wonder if it is possible that the pious expressions of the past do not necessarily coincide with the actual sentiments of the people in the past, who might also have been as aware of the tensions between the ideal of Hajj and the realities of daily life.

PART TWO

Identity and Politics

Illustrative anecdotes: Prayers for the Hajj

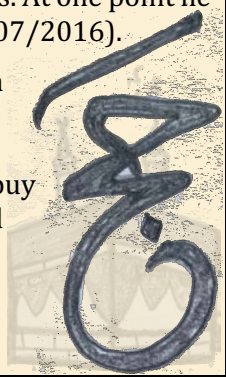
The anecdotes below are some examples that illustrate how the Hajj is intimately woven into the fabric of life for many Moroccans. This applies to such an extent that language related to pilgrimage becomes what we might call a metaphor by which people live, infusing daily conversation with a ready store of references, all of which are understood by those who hear them.

I. *Al-ḥājj* Abdullah told me that people often ask him to say prayers for them. They would say: "Say prayers for us, Oh *al-ḥājj*" and *al-ḥājj* Abdullah would reply: "*Allāh yaʿṭīk al-ḥajj*" [May God give you the Hajj] (13/08/2015).

II. Lubna told me that her grandfather longed to visit Mecca and Medina. He was by then an old man; Lubna feared her grandfather would not be able to live until the time of Hajj. She prayed to God to extend his life to be able to go on Hajj. Fortunately, Lubna was able to go on Hajj with her grandfather. "*Al-ḥamdu li-llāh* [Thank God!]," she said, and continued: "God answered my prayers." She then continued: "*Allāh lā yiḥrimnā min dhāk al-maqām*" [May God never prevent anyone from accessing these holy places] (03/11/2015).

III. As I was on the train traveling from Mohammedia to Rabat, a man who sat on the opposite seat to me was on his phone. "Yes, *al-ḥājja…* Yes, I am on the way," the man said over the phone. I could not figure out the subject of the conversation, but I could tell that the person on the other end of the line was the man's mother. He told her that he was going to stop at some shop and buy her some household needs. At one point he said: "*dʿī mʿānā, al-ḥajja*" [Pray for us, *al-ḥājja*]. (18/07/2016).

IV. Passing through the old medina of Rabat, Rue Souika was buzzing with the business of buying and selling. I moved along with the crowd, hearing along the way a young man imploring passers-by to buy colorful winter blouses that he sold. A woman passed in front of me looking at the young man's wares. I heard the man saying: "*Allāh yaʿṭīk al-ḥajj*" [May God grant you the Hajj] (20/07/2016).



CHAPTER FIVE

Hajj and Moroccan National Identity

Up! my brethren,
Strive for the highest;
We call to the world
That we are here ready;
We salute as our emblem
God, Homeland, and King
(national anthem of Morocco)

Introduction

Samiya is a woman in her sixties, widow, and mother of four, all of whom are married and live away from home. When I visited Samiya one evening in her house, she invited me to watch her daily Turkish drama with her. She volunteered to tell me the plot of the Moroccan-Arabic-dubbed drama that has been podcasted in Morocco for at least two years. Samiya lives in a well-decorated house. In the living room where we sat, there were three large sofas, a round dining table, and a couple of antique wooden coffee tables. The walls were decorated with two frames containing Qurʾanic calligraphy and an image of the Kaʿba. A golden decorated copy of the Qurʾan rested on a wooden table next to the large TV which was showing the Turkish drama.

As soon as the drama finished, Samiya switched the channel to *al-ʾūlā* or Channel 1, the first national Moroccan TV channel, to watch the evening news. The first news segment was on the celebration of the remembrance of the independence movement that had led to ending the French protectorate, often referred to as 'The Revolution of the King and the People'.[138] Addressing the Moroccan public on an occasion

[138] 'The Revolution of the King and the People' or *thawrat al-malik wa-l-shaʿb* refers to the independence movement in Morocco. This nationalist movement grew from protests regarding the Berber Dahir of May 16, 1930. On 20 August 1953 (the eve of the Feast of Sacrifice), the French authorities forced Mohammed V along with his family into exile in Corsica and then to Madagascar. Mohammed V returned from exile on 16 November 1955, and was again recognized as Sultan

celebrating the Moroccan nation-state, Mohammed VI, the King of Morocco, spoke to the nation with the following words:

> Dear citizens, it is God's will that, this year, the commemoration of the Revolution of the King and the People should coincide with the celebration of the blessed Feast of Sacrifice. Although the two events differ in essence – one being national, and the other religious – they nonetheless arouse similar emotions in the hearts and minds of Moroccans, given the values of sacrifice and loyalty underpinning them. [139]

The king's rhetoric was far from accidental but was engineered specifically so that he united the national and religious aspects of Moroccan identity. Despite insisting that the two occasions – one national and the other religious – are different in essence, the King's uniting of the two events reveals how the religious and mundane are interwoven in Morocco. Religion, here, is used as a tool to promote national identity and unity. Spurred by the interest in debates over religion and national identity, in this chapter I investigate the link between pilgrimage to Mecca and national identity in Morocco. I will argue that the pilgrimage to Mecca functions as an assertion of national identity in both public and private discourses.

This chapter thus sets out to discuss the role that pilgrimage to Mecca plays, and has played, in both public discourse and private spheres, in the (re)construction, and strengthening of national cohesion and identity in Morocco. It highlights the pilgrimage-nationalism interface and stresses the fact that, while pilgrimage is fundamentally important for a Muslim religious identification, it is also an occasion that contributes to the construction of a nationalistic discourse.

Pilgrimage is an annual global gathering and is often used as a symbol of group identification expressed in the Muslim *umma*. For many Muslims, it stimulates a sense of solidarity among communities different

after active opposition to the French protectorate. Morocco became independent in 1956 and in 1957 Mohammed V adopted the title of 'King' (cf. Wyrtzen 2015).

[139] Fieldnotes, 20/08/2018.

in their languages, national identifications, and social backgrounds, creating senses of belonging larger than the local or the regional. At the same time, however, the pilgrimage is an annual national celebration and a component of everyday life in Morocco that is used to stimulate feelings of belonging to a collective national home, thereby operating on a different, mundane dimension.

Thus, while the gathering in Mecca of millions of pilgrims for the Hajj is an expression of Islam's global, transnational Muslim community, even the possibility and experience of the Hajj is shaped and influenced by national belonging. For example, the Hajj is carefully managed through national policies. Quotas for pilgrims are set by their national citizenship: one in a thousand of a country's Muslim population is given visas, as pointed out in Chapter Two. Throughout the Hajj journey itself, pilgrims are marked by national identity. They are provided name tags, backpacks, sun visors and other paraphernalia before leaving their home country to bring with them to Mecca. Name tags and bags are often embossed with national flags or printed in their colors. Guides have national flags attached to their clothing and housing allocated to pilgrims is based on where they come from, such as the tents in Minā where accommodation is divided based on nationality. Pilgrims are also guided in their local languages and services are provided to Moroccan pilgrims in Arabic.

The separation of pilgrims signified by such a system of differentiation based on nationality, however, does not exclude the possibility of shaping a shared sense of belonging among pilgrims from different nationalities. In their study, "Estimating the Impact of the Hajj: Religion and Tolerance in Islam's Global Gathering," Clingingsmith, Khwaja, and Kremer stress how – among Pakistani pilgrims – the Hajj leads to feelings of unity with fellow Muslims through the observance of global Islamic practices. The fact that Hajj is a concrete expression of the *umma* – the global Muslim community – is evident in the accounts of Moroccan pilgrims too (cf. Eickelman and Piscatori 1990). Many Moroccan pilgrims report that their relationships with others have an indelible impact on their pilgrimage. Indeed, pilgrims tell personal

stories of bonds forged and strengthened during the Hajj, of friendships beyond social norms and potentially dividing boundaries.

In her collection *Pilgrim Stories*, Nancy Frey finds that in the open social contexts of the pilgrimage "participants come to trust themselves and others – even humanity – to a greater extent" (1998, 91). Many of the depictions of pilgrimage in pilgrims' narratives illustrate the description of Nancy Frey. And yet, at the same time and without undermining this experience, pilgrims maintain markers of difference throughout the sacred journey (cf. Coleman 2002; Sallnow 1981). Therefore, as far as the pilgrimage-nationalism interface is concerned, I ask in this chapter how do pilgrims experience their identity as part of the Moroccan nation through the Hajj experience?

To be able to answer this question, there are two perceptions to be taken into consideration: the official discourse which is promoted by the state (in Morocco, mainly presented by the King, official institutions including the mosque and state media), and a more personal discourse, expressed through the experiences and narratives of individual pilgrims. In this chapter, I argue that the pilgrimage has a central role in providing values that can be used to delineate national identity. I argue that in the official narrative of the Moroccan government, the pilgrimage to Mecca is portrayed as an occasion and an opportunity to consolidate a collective national identity, based on shared efforts to define similar attributes among group members. The pilgrimage itself, moreover, also simultaneously contributes to the construction of an individual identity in terms of the personal attributes one believes to be unique to oneself as a spiritual being, and at the same time, how one is attached both to the Islamic faith and to the homeland.

To address this complex process, I will first analyze the speeches of king Mohammed VI addressing Moroccan pilgrims in the four years to 2018; secondly, I shift focus to how pilgrimage is portrayed in mosques and state-media coverage; and thirdly, I consider the symbolic importance of being Moroccan in Mecca, where that particular national identity itself is contested. Finally, I turn to the narratives of Moroccan pilgrims regarding their pilgrimage journey after they return home. For

the necessary background I first briefly introduce the historical context in which the question of Morocco's national and religious identity is embedded.

National identity and religion in Morocco

National identity is not a pre-existing concept but is very largely constructed and produced by people as they develop and express their understandings of situations, events and other people (cf. Shatzmiller 2005). Therefore, individuals define themselves both in terms of individual uniqueness and as well as specific group memberships. The following, therefore, addresses two formulations of national identity in Morocco: Moroccan nationalism from a state perspective and being Moroccan as perceived and expressed by citizens themselves.

Religion and religious identifications feature prominently in many everyday discussions about politics or national belonging in Morocco. The national ideology has always combined what is presented as traditional culture and religious adherence combined with modernity; thus, religion and politics are barely separable (cf. Sadiqi 2011). Although the modern nation-state is a relatively recent creation, Islam has been a factor of identity in what is present-day Morocco and has been so ever since the establishment of the ninth century Idrisid dynasty, the first Moroccan Muslim dynasty, which founded the city of Fes (Abu Nasr 1975, 78). Since then, Islam has taken various different forms which had different effects on the character of Moroccan society, from largely peripheral, to mystical and in the twentieth century, involving more modern visions of Islam (cf. Wyrtzen 2016; Spiegel 2015; Zeghal 2008; Geertz 1971; Hagopian 1963).[140]

The Moroccan constitution of 1996 describes the kingdom as a sovereign Muslim state, *al-dawla al-islāmiyya*. The constitution

[140] Morocco was ruled by the ʿAlawi dynasty since the seventeenth century. Many Amazigh tribes were, however, not submissive to the ruler (Sultan). This lead in the beginning of the twentieth century to two different regions: *bled es-Siba* (areas outside central government control) and *bled al-makhzen* (areas under central government control) (Hoffman 1967; Zeghal 2008).

emphasizes the importance attached to the Muslim religion in the character of the nation. It introduces Morocco as an Islamic country with a legislative body and political parties. In the hierarchal structure of the government, however, the monarch is the core of religious power. The Moroccan ʿAlawi ruling dynasty (1666 - present) continues to claim heritage as genealogical descendants of the prophet Muhammad as part of the narrative that legitimizes their claims to authority (Nelson 1978, 207-9). Claiming direct descent from the prophet Muhammad, the ʿAlawi family has the title of *sharifian* (noble) family. This title has always had a large influence in Moroccan culture and society (cf. Zeghal 2008; Howe 2005).[141]

Furthermore, the religious significance of the king is illustrated in his title of *amīr al-muʾminīn* or Commander of the Faithful, the highest religious and political authority (Sadiqi 2018, 46). A title historically significant in Islamic history and associated with Moroccan sultans, the religious status was codified by king Hassan II in the 1962 constitution (Biagi 2014; Waterbury 1970).[142] Of independent Morocco's eight constitutional reforms, seven were made during the reign of Hassan II.[143] All constitutions ensured the religious and legal legitimacy of the king and the political power of the *makhzen* (Sater 2016).[144] For example, article 19, of the Moroccan constitution of 1996 states that:

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[141] In addition to the ruling family, several Moroccan families claim to be descendants of the prophet Muhammad which also comes with certain symbolic prestige (Bazzaz 2010).

[142] In Sunni Muslim tradition, *amīr al-muʾminīn* (prince of the believers or commander of the faithful) originally referred to Caliph Umar, a companion of the prophet Mohammad, and was used by subsequent caliphs. It is also one of the titles of the caliphs, successors to the prophet Muhammad, as both heads of states and (honorary) religious leaders and it can also have military connotations as commander in chief (cf. Wyrtzen, 2015). According to Shiʿi tradition, the label refers exclusively to Caliph Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet. No other current head of state assumes the title apart from the king of Morocco.

[143] The first constitution was that of 14 December 1962. Since, Morocco has experienced eight constitutional amendments. The first in 1970 and the last in 2011 (cf. Ruchti 2012; Touhtou 2014).

[144] The notion of *makhzen* refers to the central power and political authority of the state including the close entourage of the king as the effective center of power and political control (Maghraoui 2001). When speaking about the

> The King, *Amīr al-Muʾminīn* (lit. 'Commander of the Faithful'), shall be the supreme representative of the nation and the symbol of the unity thereof. He shall be the guarantor of the perpetuation and the continuity of the state. As Defender of the Faith, he shall ensure respect for the constitution. He shall be the protector of the rights and liberties of citizens, social groups and organizations.[145]

Post – 1963, king Hassan II used Islam to both ensure the authority of the royal palace as well as to legitimize his own power (Benomar 1988, 544). Hassan II secured his authority through appropriating to himself the control of religious affairs which had formerly been conducted by three distinct institutions: the 'ulama' or religious clergy, *zāwiya* or lodge for religious authority, and the monarch (Zeghal 2008, xii). Malika Zeghal argues that the Moroccan monarch pursues policies of religious regulation in order to establish the monarchy's hegemony over both the political and religious realms in Morocco (Ibid).

One example of the cementation of power of the royal family is the principle of the *bayʿa*, the oath of allegiance to the leader.[146] Every

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makhzen, what is implied is generally an authoritarian practice of government without any form of accountability (Ibid).

[145] In addition to article 19, the following articles give the King additional powers: articles 23 (The person of the King shall be sacred and inviolable); 24 (The King shall appoint the Prime Minister. Upon the prime minister's recommendation, the King shall appoint the other Cabinet members, just as he may terminate their services. The King shall terminate the services of the Government either on his own initiative or because of their resignation.); 27 (The King may dissolve the two houses of parliament or one thereof by royal decree, in accordance with the conditions prescribed in articles 71 and 73); and 30 (The King shall be the commander-in-chief of the Royal Armed Forces. He shall make civil and military appointments and shall reserve the right to delegate such a power) (Ruchti 2012).

[146] the *bayʿa* (investiture or an oath of allegiance) is a pre-Islamic tribal allegiance system that was incorporated in Islamic tradition. Initially in Islam, the *bayʿa* was sworn to the prophet Muhammad as an oath of allegiance (Khel 1981, 227-38). Anybody who wanted to enter Islam did so by reciting the basic statement of the faith expressing his faith in the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad. The Prophet also formally took *bayʿa* from the people and tribes of Medina. Through this formal act they entered the Islamic community showing their willingness to follow and obey the Prophet (Ibid). Since then, the *bayʿa* became an act by which a certain number of persons, acting

year, on March third, at the Celebration of the Throne, a pledge of allegiance is made, in which ministers, mayors, deputies, and all local representatives of the government present themselves before the King and renew their *bayʿa* in an official ceremony. The *bayʿa* symbolically affirms the authority of the ruling monarch as a leader who is not only a political leader but also a direct descendent of the Prophet and who thus deserves the title of 'commander of the faithful' (Eickelman and Salvatore 2022, 92-115). Among Moroccans, the status of the King is assured in the hierarchical formula declared in the national motto: God, homeland, and the King (Touhtou 2014).

The process of political and religious influence that Hassan II left behind was extended when Mohammed VI ascended the throne in 1999. Mohammed VI introduced new policies that resulted in an administrative restructuring regarding the way in which religion is managed in Morocco. There was a strong push for a distinctively Moroccan form of Islam to be achieved by organizing the religious field and pursuing the training of religious scholars inside and outside the country (Hissouf 2016).[147] For example, in 2013, Morocco launched an internationally oriented imam training policy in line with moderate 'Moroccan-style' Islam, based on the Sunni Maliki school of thought.[148] In 2015, Morocco inaugurated the Mohammed VI Institute for Imam Training in Rabat, thus institutionalizing the training of Moroccan, African, and European preachers and religious scholars (cf. Hmimnat 2020).[149]

individually or collectively, recognize the authority of another person as the head of a Muslim state or community (Podeh 2010, 117-52).

[147] The training of religious scholars initiative was a quick response to the terrorist events that occurred in Morocco on May 16, 2003. The policy aimed to deal with extremism and terrorism. Moroccan Islam, generally considered modern, clearly rejects extreme Salafism, including Jihadism (Hissouf 2016).

[148] Information provided by a local official via personal communication.

[149] For more information on Morocco's transnational religious policy, see, among others, Hmimnat (2020; 2018), Werenfels (2014), and Munson (1993).

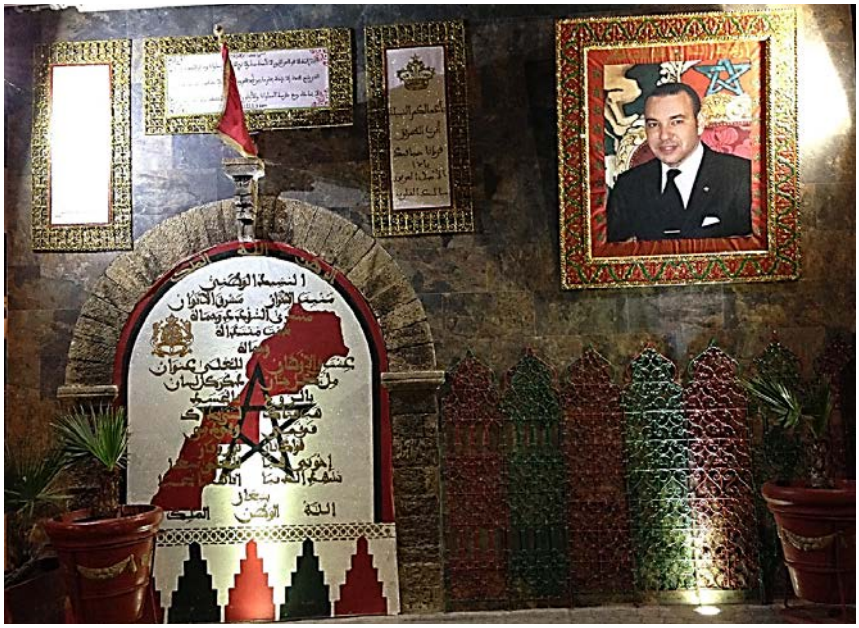

Figure 25: Wall decorated with the map of Morocco, lyrics of the national anthem, the national motto 'God, Homeland, the King', the flag of Morocco, a framed verse of the Qur'an (*āyat al-kursī*, the Throne Verse, Qur'an 2, 225) and a portrait of the king Mohammed VI (Casablanca, 17/09/2015).

Figure 26: Mural of Moroccan flag and motto 'God, Homeland, the King' (El Jadida, 14/09/2018)

This supreme and all-embracing status has not been without challenge. In the popular uprisings that swept across North Africa starting in Tunisia in December 2010 (Harb and Atallah 2015), approximately 150,000 –200,000 Moroccans in 53 cities and towns across the country marched in a call for greater democracy and change on 20 February 2011: hence it was called the 20 February Movement (Madani, Maghraoui and Zerhouni 2012; Fernández Molina 2011). The people marching called for democracy and change, symbolized by the popular Arabic call of *al-shaʿib yurīd dustūr jadīd* (the people want a new constitution).[150] Furthermore, many slogans called for the end of article 19 which granted the monarch near absolute authority, including the power to appoint the prime minister, without the latter ever having stood for election.

The response to the 20 February Movement was a rapid drafting and adoption of a new constitution in July 2011. Compared to earlier constitutional texts, which promote a selective identity (Arabic and Islamic), the new constitution was more open. The preamble states that national unity is forged by the convergence of Arab-Islamic, Amazigh and Saharan-Hassani components and enriched by "African, Andalusian, Mediterranean and Hebrew" heritage (Morocco's Constitution of 2011).[151]

Although the 2011 constitution includes important departures from the previous one, in the new constitution, the King effectively remains at the center of political and constitutional life, and he continues to concentrate all powers in his hands.[152] As Commander of the Faithful

[150] Although the 20 February Movement was inspired by the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt and had similar characteristics in the role of Internet and the protests bringing together thousands of young people, the movement cannot be interpreted as simply part of the Arab Spring, since Moroccan civil society has been active over many years before the Arab Spring demanding changes in the constitution (cf. Maghraoui 2008; 2002).

[151] Also in the 2011 constitution, the Arabic language is no longer the only official language of the state, and the Amazigh language has also become an official state language and part of a common heritage of all Moroccans, without exception, as stated in article 5.

[152] The 2011 constitution has gone through several changes compared to the 1996 text including the recognition of new rights, recognition of the Amazigh language as an official language, and the promotion of human rights. However,

and Head of State, the King guarantees respect for Islam, the constitution, the good functioning of the institutions and supervision of all of Morocco's international commitments (Ibid). The King is the protector of democratic choice as well as of the rights and freedoms of citizens and communities. Finally, he guarantees the free exercise of religion and chairs the Council of the *'Ulama',* a body empowered to issue *fatwā*, or religious edicts, on the issues that are presented to it. In this sense, the Council of the *'Ulama'* is a kind of constitutional body that is mandated to monitor the interpretation of the 'Islamic' identity of the laws and policies. Therefore, the King remains at the center of political and constitutional life, particularly as he alone can revise the constitution.[153]

In addition to the constitution, over the years the public speeches of the King have become a prime reference for the political and religious life in Morocco (cf. Madani, Maghraoui, and Zerhouni 2012). For example, political parties use the speeches of the King as guidelines for the government. Most political leaders refer to them, and no one can disagree with their substantive content (Maghraoui 2011).[154] The speeches are the dynamic behind every change, the blueprint for various actions and the center around which the politics of consensus is constructed. For example, in his 30 July 2004 Throne Speech, Mohammed VI reminded the citizens of Morocco that he has been the only one to reconcile the political and the religious spheres in order to safeguard the sanctity of religion, which he stated must remain outside the influence of various social and political opinion groups; this was clearly an attempt to control the

the constitution continues to be criticized for example for not establishing a 'true parliamentary monarchy' (cf. Newcomb 2017; Madani, Maghraoui and Zerhouni 2012).

[153] The king appoints the head of government and other cabinet members on a proposal by the head of government (Madani, Maghraoui and Zerhouni 2012).

[154] The constitutional basis for this authority of the speeches of the king was formulated in article 28 of the 1996 constitution, which stated that: "The King shall have the right to deliver addresses to the nation and to the parliament. The messages shall be read out before both houses and shall not be subject to any debate" (cf. Maghraoui 2011). The same constitutional basis that forbids debating the King's speeches is now part of article 52 of the 2011 constitution.

multitude of political expressions in the name of religion and to protect the unity of worship. This speech was given following the 2003 Casablanca bombings so in his speech he wanted to make a strong statement against radical Muslims (Kaye 2008, 148-50).[155]

The aforementioned constitutional and political events illustrate the close relationship of the head of state to Islam as the state religion. During my fieldwork, I observed how the King of Morocco actively cultivated the image of himself as a pious Muslim. For example, every year in Ramadan, he presides over a series of religious lectures known as *durūs al-Ḥassaniyya* (cf. Porter 2001, 25).[156] This Ramadan tradition was started in 1963 by the late king Hassan II (hence its name), and has hosted prominent Muslim scholars and jurists from diverse different Islamic branches and ideological backgrounds to discuss issues and concerns of the Muslim *umma* (Porter 2001, 35). The lectures are attended by the King, other members of the royal family, religious scholars, high-ranking state officials, and members of Muslim countries' diplomatic missions to Morocco. The visible marks of adherence to Islam by the king also include his weekly attendance at Friday prayers in which he is referred to as both *amīr al-muʾminīn* and the king, and which are podcasted on national TV (cf. Roberson 2014, 67). As he attends the prayers, the king dresses in special garb reserved for religious events that emphasize his status as king and religious leader (cf. Landau 1962, 25). Also, the king ritually slaughters a ram during *ʿīd l-kbīr* – symbolically – on behalf of the Moroccans as a nation, as I was told by my interlocutors.

Traditional regional culture, religion, and modernity are all presented in the state discourse as integral parts of a single composite of Moroccan identity (Hissouf 2016). Given the fact that the Moroccan population was, and still is, in great part Muslim, and given the importance of religion in daily life in the Moroccan society, the Hajj offers a central opportunity for the consolidation of beliefs, for insuring the

[155] The Casablanca bombings were a series of suicide bombings on May 16, 2003 in Casablanca where 14 bombers, most of whom were between 20 and 23 years old, bombed four places in the city, killing 33 civilians (cf. Howe 2005).
[156] Moroccan TV, Channel 1, 01/06/2018.

religious legitimacy and responsibility of the King, and for enforcing religious, national and other identities of Moroccans in general.[157] The pilgrimage to Mecca is a pivotal moment where the king addresses the nation by addressing the pilgrims.

In the next section, I offer translation and analysis of the annual – often called – farewell speech, offered on behalf of the king to pilgrims on their first day of departure from Morocco to Saudi Arabia.

Figure 27: The king attending *durūs al-Ḥassaniyya* podcasted on Channel 1(Casablanca, 01/06/2018)

Figure 28: The king attending Friday prayers in Laayoune podcasted on Channel 6 (Morocco, 05/02/2016)

[157] In her book *Fasting and Feasting in Morocco*, Marjo Buitelaar refers to national identity politics also in relation to the fasting month of Ramadan (cf. Buitelaar 1993).

Figure 29: The king slaughtering a ram podcasted on Channel 1 (Rabat, 12/09/2016)

The official discourse on the Hajj and the role of the King

When the first group of Moroccan pilgrims headed to Saudi Arabia to perform pilgrimage for the hijri year 1437 on 31st of August 2015, they received an official farewell message from the king at Rabat – Salé Airport. The message was read to the Moroccan pilgrims by the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Ahmed Toufiq. A similar tradition was in evidence every year during my fieldwork. Therefore, I analyzed the pilgrimage farewell speech of the king for the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. In general, the speeches focus on four aspects: the importance of Hajj as a religious duty for Muslims, the significance and role of the government and the King, the roles and responsibilities of Moroccan pilgrims in Mecca, and specific messages related to the specific year or time of year in which the speech is made.

The four speeches all begin with the king congratulating Moroccans performing Hajj, mentioning its importance for Muslims at large, and for him in particular. For example:

> I am sure you are aware, honorable pilgrims, of the importance I attach to the pilgrimage and the attention I devote to this pillar of Islam, which is the culmination of a lifetime of worship. Through Hajj, we make sure our faith is complete, in keeping with the words of the Almighty: 'Today

> I have perfected your faith for you, completed My favors upon you, and chosen Islam as your way.'[158] (20/08/2016).

The role of the king is heavily emphasized throughout the speeches. First, he is presented as the Commander of the Faithful, protector of faith and religion, who is entrusted with ensuring religious practices and rituals are observed at all prescribed times. One aspect of this construction of the King's role relies on his descent from the prophet Muhammad. In the 2018 speech, the king states:

> I realize how eager you are to visit the holy sites and the blessed tomb of my ancestor, prophet Muhammad – may peace and blessings be upon him. I pray that the Almighty God may fulfill your wishes and answer your prayers. I invoke His blessings upon you and pray that you may return safely to your homeland and your loved ones (26/07/2018)

Of particular interest to the argument I wish to make in this chapter are statements like "It goes without saying that the Hajj season is a time to remember a part of the blessed life of our most exalted Prophet, *my ancestor Prophet Muhammad* - may peace and blessings be upon him" (26/07/2018), "…An accepted Hajj, *in accordance with the words of my ancestor, Prophet Mohammad*, may peace and blessings be upon him: 'There is no reward for an accepted Hajj except Paradise'" (07/08/2017), and "Be ever mindful of the exalted status of *my ancestor*, the Prophet of Islam - may peace and blessings be upon him - through whom the Almighty has graced us with the last Message and *given us the perfect guidance* (20/08/2016)."[159] Such statements function as a means to create authority by association and underscore the power of the king through his claimed connection with the Prophet.

In his message, the king of Morocco also emphasizes his role in ensuring that pilgrims receive the correct religious guidance. Such interest in religious orthodoxy can be seen in statements such as "My message to you illustrates my concern to ensure the preservation of religious tenets and to show how much I care about them" (26/07/2018). The message includes a reminder that to perform Hajj correctly requires

[158] The verse quoted from the Qur'an (5: 3).
[159] From the farewell speeches of Hajj in 2018, 2017, and 2016 (italics mine).

knowledge, action and sound ethical behavior. The message also makes an emphasis of the fact that the king spared no effort to facilitate pilgrimage for those who are able to perform it, by giving his instructions to the Minister for Islamic Affairs to take whatever measures are needed for the performance of this pillar of Islam, and to provide pilgrims with the assistance and guidance they need through the appropriate religious, health and administrative delegations accompanying them, making sure they received all the necessary services in the Holy Land. These references could be seen as underscoring the indispensability of the King, who uses his authority to ensure proper management.

The king further refers to the duties of Moroccan pilgrims including acting in accordance with the guidelines given by Moroccan and Saudi officials and presenting their best behavior in front of other pilgrims. Since Moroccan pilgrims are representing the country during the pilgrimage, the King asks them to serve as ambassadors for their country, conveying a positive image of its cultural heritage. For example, the king addresses pilgrims saying:

> I … want you to serve as ambassadors for your country, conveying a fine image of its cultural heritage. I also want you to understand that our country owes its security and stability to the aforementioned ideals and immutable values. Under my guidance, our country is continuing its successful march towards further progress and accomplishments (26/07/2018).

> …I must now remind you of your individual and collective obligations towards your beloved country. Indeed, you need to reflect your time-honored culture, with its many different constituents and the longstanding values that your ancestors have upheld and embodied since times immemorial. Chief among these is your commitment to the immutable, sacred values of the Moroccan State – a nation which is based on moderate Islam and the Sunni doctrine, as represented by the Maliki doctrine and the Ashʿari rite. This is the cornerstone of the Commandership of the Faithful on which the constitutional, democratic and social monarchy is based. I therefore want you to be ambassadors for your country during that great gathering and reflect the characteristic,

> longstanding traditions of Moroccans, namely those of brotherhood, solidarity, moderation and openness (08/08/2017).

In each of his messages, the king of Morocco reminds pilgrims of their duty to express "the lofty values of Islam" while remaining committed to their "Moroccan cultural identity." In these messages, the pilgrimage is appropriated as a signifier for indigenous pride and a vehicle for cultural celebration. Being ambassadors, pilgrims are responsible for presenting an image of Morocco away from the homeland. In relation to their behavior in Mecca, the king instructs pilgrims to be patient, to show restraint and self-control and to avoid any inclination towards selfishness as those are "the virtues Islam wants Muslims to comply with" (2015).

Another responsibility for Moroccan pilgrims, according to the King, is their reciprocal duty towards him in his capacity as the Commander of the Faithful. The duty includes prayers for the king who, according to the 2015 message, provides comfort for pilgrims, protects the unity of the nation and ensures the country's stability and development. Every year, the message includes clear instructions for the pilgrims to perform *duʿāʾ* prayers for the king and his ministers at the holiest of the sites. In the 2018 message, the pilgrims were reminded:

> When you are at that most impressive place and at other sites as well – especially when you stand on Mount Arafat – remember your duty to pray for your King, who provides for your comfort and security, for the unity of the nation and for the betterment of your lives. Ask God to help me perform good deeds, to grant me and all members of the royal family good health, to make me ever pleased and satisfied with our beloved Crown Prince, His Royal Highness Prince Moulay El Hassan, and to shower His blessings upon my esteemed grandfather, his late majesty King Mohammed V, and upon my revered father, his late Majesty King Hassan II – may they rest in peace. May the Almighty forever protect and safeguard our homeland.

In the same message of 2018, the monarch also urges pilgrims to comply with and "observe strictly" the ministry's arrangements in an orderly

fashion. He also calls on pilgrims to comply with the requirements of law and order and to abide by the instructions provided by the Saudi authorities concerning the organization of the Hajj season.

Among their duties, Moroccan pilgrims should strive to behave and show manners that are advocated as part of the Moroccan cultural narrative: a spirit of genuine tolerance and brotherhood. Moroccan pilgrims are also reminded to be mindful of the words of the Prophet "None of you truly becomes a believer until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself" (31/08/2015).[160] The following passage of the message of 2015 reflects some of the claims to national values that the King wishes to pass to those addressed:

> I am sure you realize it is your duty to represent your country properly, by embodying the values I strive to see upheld in the kingdom through compliance with the precepts of Islam as God has intended: a middle-of-the-road religion, without extremism, reclusiveness or intransigence – a faith based rather on cooperation, solidarity and commendable conduct. The aim is to erase that stereotyped image circulated by the enemies of Islam, by radicals and religious zealots. (31/08/2015)

Anderson (1983) heavily emphasizes the role of language in the making of imagined communities, particularly in references to history, traditions and religion. In this sense, the symbolic message of the king's speech is an opportunity to promote a 'moderate Moroccan Islam' that is presumed to be inspired by the mystical Sufi heritage. The message is an opportunity to ensure that those listening understand Morocco to be a peaceful, pluralistic and tolerant nation. The message arguably has a third audience; the wider world. In this reading, the pilgrimage is appropriated as a symbol to promote a narrative of tolerance and to stress the power and influence of the monarchy.

Of course, a message is only effective if it is openly received; listening to a message of the king before departure to Saudi Arabia is a tradition that has been respected in Morocco for many years, both

[160] This hadith can be traced to *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Al-Bukhārī, vol. 13, book 2, hadith 6).

televised in the news and available in print media the following day. The initiation of the Hajj journey can be considered as a symbolic expression of how religious and national identities come to the fore in Morocco. A Moroccan friend once told me: "It is one of the responsibilities of the king, as the Commander of the Faithful, to initiate the journey of pilgrims to Mecca." Thus, a quasi-ritual status has become attached to the monarch's speeches, enhancing their significance and becoming, in a sense, an integral part of the Hajj experience.

The commonality or sameness that constitutes a collective identity is expressed using symbols, referring to rituals and so on (cf. Polletta and Jasper 2001). The messages of the monarch suggest a collective national identity. In its most basic form, this identity is reflected in the shared aspect of the pilgrimage and the sense of 'one-ness' or a sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group that the messages strive to convey.[161] The king's addresses underscore national unity. His message comes as a reminder for pilgrims of certain individual and collective obligations towards their country. Among these is the "commitment to the immutable, sacred values of the Moroccan State – a nation which is based on moderate Islam (…) reflecting the traditions of Moroccans, namely those of brotherhood, solidarity, moderation and openness" (08/08/2017).

During fieldwork, I asked Moroccans if the monarch himself had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. Many people assured me he had. However, some others stated that the king has only performed *ʿumra* and never the Hajj. Many Moroccans stressed the role of the king in supervising the management of the pilgrimage to Mecca; they thereby ascribe to the king a central role distinct from that of a pilgrim. Additionally, as if there exists a need to explain the fact that the king may not have performed Hajj, some referred to a popular belief that the king would die if he went on Hajj. Although I have no evidence that this is a widespread theory, it could be seen as indicative of a need to exonerate the king from any criticism.

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[161] On collective identity see for example, Brubaker & Cooper 2000; Snow 2001); Polletta & Jasper 2011.

State-affiliated institutions participate in the process of the confirmation of the role of the state in the nationalistic discourse of the pilgrimage – such as television, newspapers, and radio – all of which participate in affirming the national importance attached to pilgrims. One such example is that of the mosques, especially during Friday sermons attended by large numbers of Moroccans. In the following section, I offer a case of a Friday sermon during the Hajj season of 2016.[162]

I regularly attended Friday sermons during my fieldwork, often in the company of one or several of my interlocutors. Before a Friday sermon which I attended in one of the mosques of the coastal town of Essaouira, I sat with a group of women listening to men who were performing collective recitation of the Qur'an in the men's section of the mosque. Their voices reached us though the mosque's loudspeakers. The recitation continued for around twenty minutes before it was concluded with '*ṣadaqa Allāhu l-ʿaẓīm'*.[163] Following the call for prayer, *ādhān*, and before prayer, the *khuṭba* of the Friday sermon took place. The imam addressed the gathering congregation with passages from the Qur'an and announced the theme of the sermon which was marked by this specific time of year. "These are blessed days," the imam said. He then continued: "today we witness the pilgrims as they are performing the Hajj in Mecca… In Morocco, we are connected with them in our hearts…"

The imam continued explaining the spiritual and religious importance of the Hajj and how people in Morocco strive to perform this holy duty. He then emphasized a way to connect physically with those in Mecca, by fasting. He said:

> On the Day of Arafat, we can connect further with those performing the duty on the plain of Arafat near Mecca. We connect with them as we fast the Day of Arafat in faith; we connect with them when we slaughter the sheep on the day of *ʿīd*; we connect with them as we celebrate the Hajj in Morocco (16/09/2016)

[162] Documented Friday sermon (fieldnotes, 16/09/2016).
[163] *Ṣadaqa Allāhu l-ʿaẓīm* (God Most Mighty has told the truth) is a phrase normally said after recitation of the Qur'an.

The imam was particularly adamant about the importance of harmony and good citizenship among all Moroccans, stressing the need for solidarity and unity, a solidarity expressed by a shared religious observation. He finished his sermon by praying for God's forgiveness and blessings for Moroccans performing their Hajj in Mecca, all Muslims, Muslims in Morocco and he extended the prayer for the King, the royal family, the prince, and the late kings Muhammad V and Hassan II.

Friday sermons featured not only religious messages but also ethnic, cultural, and political ones. In a small town near Rabat, I met an imam of a mosque to learn more about Friday sermons. He told me that imams of every Moroccan mosque registered at the ministry receive and read out the exact same sermons to Friday congregations. These sermons are written and disseminated by a central committee of the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs. He also mentioned that the sermons are explicitly managed so that they correspond with both the religious calendar and the national agenda. For example, after the Hajj proper was concluded, I attended a Friday sermon in Casablanca where the theme of the sermon was 'citizenship and patriotism'. The sermon focused on the importance of the homeland as a gift from God to man. "The link between man and land is like that between a child and his mother who carried him, fed him, and raised him… Therefore, love of homeland is part of one's faith," the imam explained.

When the imam illustrated the importance of citizenship and patriotism, he used examples from Mecca. The first example given by the imam was related to the feelings of love and belonging prophet Muhammad had towards Mecca. The imam spoke about the night of *hijra*, when the Prophet left Mecca to Medina and discussed how difficult it was for him to leave his homeland. The imam said:

> The Prophet stood on the border of Mecca and said: 'By God, you [Mecca] are the best and most beloved land to God, and the dearest of the land to me. By God, had I not been expelled from you, I would never have left you'.[164]

[164] I could trace this hadith to the hadith collection of Ibn Mājah (vol. 4, book 25, hadith 3108).

Another example of the feelings of belonging to the homeland, according to the imam, was the case of the prophet Abraham and his feelings for Mecca. For example, Abraham prayed to God to protect it and make it a place of safety and abundance.[165] By referencing the two examples from Mecca, the imam illustrated that loving one's homeland is a duty, part of one's faith and primordial human nature, *fiṭra*.[166] Through the story of the prophet's *hijra* from Mecca, the imam defined 'real patriotism' as contributing to the development of one's country and the development of its civilization and insuring its safety and stability. When this sermon was delivered, Hajj was still fresh enough for Mecca to be a timely and powerful symbol to use. At that juncture, it is likely that many pilgrims had not returned home, whilst others started arriving from Hajj.

The third official discourse that I would like to discuss here is that of the state media. In Morocco, I witnessed how Moroccans follow the Hajj events in Mecca with keen interest. During the Hajj season, local channels report news from Mecca. The images on TV channels including Channel 1, Channel 6 which is dedicated to religious education, and even the primarily entertainment channel 2M showed pilgrims around the Kaʿba, praying in the Grand Mosque of Mecca, and standing on the plain of Arafat. These broadcasts focused on the experience of Moroccan pilgrims during the Hajj. They emphasized that pilgrimage revealed Islam to be "a religion of tolerance, brotherhood and humanity" and "a faith which rests on principles like unity of Muslim communities, equal rights and obligations, peace, respect for others, and the protection of Muslims" (Chanel 1 news report, 02/09/2015).

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[165] The prayer was mentioned in the Qurʾan in two places: "Remember when Abraham said, 'Lord, make this town safe! Preserve me and my offspring from idolatry'" (Qurʾan 14, 35); "Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this land secure and provide with produce those of its people who believe in God and the Last Day.' God said, 'As for those who disbelieve, I will grant them enjoyment for a short while and then subject them to the torment of the Fire– an evil destination.'" (Qurʾan 2,126).

[166] *Fiṭra* refers to the state of purity and innocence Muslims believe all humans to be born with. It is usually translated as 'natural constitution' or 'innate nature' (cf. Macdonald 2012).

During the Hajj season of 2016, Channel 1 of the National TV in Morocco had daily reports reflecting the experience of pilgrims in Mecca. One report was exploring the living conditions of pilgrims. It began by showing two middle-aged men reading the Qur'an on their beds in a room overlooking the Grand Mosque of Mecca. From the window of the room, the footage showed the Kaʿba and the minarets of the mosque. Then, the reporter interviewed four women who sat on a bed in a similar room to the first overlooking the Kaʿba. One of the women prayed to God to protect the pilgrims and help them in performing the rituals, to protect all Muslims, and to protect the King, to which the other women responded: "Amen!"

Figure 30: Screen shot of a news report showing Moroccan pilgrims in their hotel with a view of the Kaʿba (26/09/2016)

Although Moroccan state channels largely showed positive reports from Mecca, there are other channels of communication through which the official media claims were contested. The accessibility of new forms of communication and new media play a significant role in contesting religious authority in the Middle East in general (cf. Eickelman and Anderson 1999, 1-18). The growth and usage of social media – in addition to the development of education – opened up channels for contestation which can be noticed in pilgrims' reflections on their experiences in Mecca (cf. Schulz 2012). In Rabat, for example, a Moroccan friend shared a video showing Moroccan pilgrims complaining about the unhealthy conditions they suffered during the 2017 Hajj season in Saudi Arabia. This incident created controversy on Moroccan social media. One video showed a group of people carrying the Moroccan flag in what appeared to be a demonstration against the management of the accommodation of Moroccans near the site of Minā. In a report that a Moroccan pilgrim published on social media, a man wrote: "all Moroccans are standing together in Mecca" (18/08/2017).

Figure 31: Screenshot from a short video of a demonstration in Minā shared via WhatsApp (26/09/2015)

In their edited volume on new Muslim media, Eickelman and Andersen (1999) speak about the fragmentation of religious authority due to the creation of alternative sites of religious discourse beyond the traditional methods. Pilgrims actively use social media and other communication platforms to voice their opinions and challenge the discourse the state puts forward in its official media. Another example of such contestation is a video I received via WhatsApp from Lubna, one of my interlocutors whom I will introduce in Chapter Seven. The video featured a group of pilgrims as they complained about the quality of food served during the Hajj, as well as about having to stay in unsanitary accommodation in the holy city. "This is the dinner offered to the Moroccan pilgrims: an expired juice box," says a man as he showed the camera the offending item. "Moroccans, if you are planning to come on Hajj next year, you need to speak for your rights. There is only hunger and dirt," the man continued. Thus, the positive construction of national and religious identity, which is initiated at the topmost level of Moroccan society is not without its challenge or counterpoint in the modern age of digital technology.

Figure 32: Screenshot of a video of Moroccans complaining about their distance from the mosque and bad food service in their hotel in Mecca; shared via Facebook (05/09/2016)

The next chapter will discuss various stories related to the pilgrimage in relation to the management of the Hajj. For now, I will move to discuss personal reflections on the Hajj experience in relation to Moroccan national identity and belonging.

Moroccans' reflecting on the Hajj experience and national identity

During my fieldwork in Morocco, thousands of Moroccans performed the pilgrimage to Mecca every year together with nearly two million Muslim pilgrims representing virtually every nation in the world. In Mecca, Moroccans mingle with other pilgrims and prejudices and petty differences seem to be washed away as pilgrims dress in seamless white garments and perform the same rituals in an experience that reflects, according to the previously quoted Malcolm X, a spirit of true brotherhood among people of numerous colors and races. Echoing the words of Malcolm X, I heard many Muslims making the point that the Hajj represents a kind of ideal society, free of the biases and divisions that dominate the profane world. The Hajj, in this sense, is seen as producing and reinforcing Muslim unity. Many pilgrims returning from Mecca told me that their relationships with others during Hajj had made an indelible impact on their pilgrimage. Indeed, each pilgrim told personal stories of bonds forged and strengthened during pilgrimage, of friendships that defied national boundaries.

Pilgrims generally spoke of what can be described as *communitas* (Turner and Turner 1978, 13). This *communitas* is expressed through the establishment of relationships with other pilgrims that are – or may seem – "undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, spontaneous, concrete, and unmediated" (Turner 2012, 4). Victor Turner famously found *communitas* to be an identifying component of the pilgrimage ritual, one considered sacred or holy. And yet, despite this harmony, many pilgrims judge one another, and the experience stimulates individual reflections on national belongings and differences between Moroccans and Muslims of other nations. The following excerpt is from a conversation I had with

Samiya, the woman I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and two of her neighbors, one Thursday afternoon in Casablanca.

I joined Samiya to visit her neighbor, Muna, who had returned from Hajj a few days earlier. As we walked side by side towards Muna's house, I helped Samiya carry a bag full of sugar cones, a common practice when visiting those returning from Hajj. The gift of sugar, according to a local friend, is an old tradition which dates back to a time when sugar was rarely available and such a gift reflected respect and appreciation. At Muna's door, we met with Zaynab, another neighbor who came to visit. In Muna's living room, the new pilgrim welcomed us and immediately asked her two young daughters to bring sweets and drinks.

The girls disappeared for a couple of minutes and returned carrying two trays, one containing plates of dates and three small glasses of Zamzam water and the other a pot of Moroccan tea which they placed on a round table where two more trays were readily available with a rich variety of traditional marzipan sweets. Once the women had inquired about Muna's health, trip conditions, and the pilgrimage experience, they wanted to learn more about the journey:

> **Samiya:** How did you perform the rites? How was the journey?
>
> **Muna:** Thank God! It was a wonderful journey. All the rites were fine… I am thankful to be back home with my daughters… and I am finally back in my country!
>
> **Zaynab** [who has not been on Hajj] commented: May God grant all Muslims a visit to those holy shrines.
>
> [The two other women said 'Amen!' in agreement with Fatima's supplication prayer]
>
> **Zaynab:** How was that holy place? How was your experience?
>
> **Muna:** May God grant all Muslims a visit to those holy shrines! I cried, prayed, did *duʿāʾ* prayers and all rituals were very nice… I learned a lot about the people I travelled with… I made friends with people from many countries.
>
> **Samiya:** Yes, so many people from numerous countries… I still remember how those Indonesians were so organized, always clean and polite…

Muna: Yes, especially those of Indonesia and Malaysia. They are very organized… But us Moroccans, we are not very bad either. We are not as organized as these people or even Turkish people, but we are more developed than many other pilgrims… We are more organized… I thanked God that I am Moroccan!

[The two guests looked puzzled by Muna's last comment and asked for explanation]

Muna: This experience made me think about our life in Morocco. Our traditions are different from other people, our culture is very nice, our food is good, our land is beautiful. Compared to many people, we were organized… People of Morocco behave better than many others.

Zaynab: We are also good at adapting to different conditions. It is great that you are back now.

Muna: Yes; I thank God that I am back home… I thanked God that I am Moroccan… Thank God I am Moroccan!

Samiya: The life in Morocco feels good when one is away and when comparing with other people.

Muna: Even people's looks are different. Seeing so many men, during Hajj, I now think my husband is good looking which is something I never thought!

[The two women laugh at Muna's comment.]

Muna: Seriously! I see my husband as a handsome man now.

Samiya: Our land is beautiful; Morocco is good.

Muna: Our country is beautiful, and its people are good.

The conversation I witnessed between Muna, Samiya and Zaynab reveals some personal reflections on identity during the pilgrimage to Mecca. For Muna, the pilgrimage was an opportunity to reflect on her Moroccan identity and to compare Moroccan culture, practices, and national heritage to those of pilgrims from other nations. The encounters with other people, their ways and traditions, served to reinforce a sense of contentment with the traditions of home. The same newly restored appreciation applied to food, culture and even husband! The humorous point about discovering afresh her husband's attractiveness underscores the sense of personal, social and national positive reinforcement which pilgrims experience.

Following the pilgrimage, Muna experienced enhanced gratitude for her national identity. Similarly, other Moroccans find themselves appreciating Moroccan unity to a great extent during and after the pilgrimage to Mecca. For example, Maysa, a woman in her thirties who went on Hajj with her elderly father, told me that she enjoyed meeting Moroccan women from different parts of Morocco in Mecca. In the tent camp in Minā, where women are separated from men, both women and men get the chance to become acquainted with those staying in their tent. Even though pilgrims come from all around the world and gather in Minā, the tent camp is organized in sections accommodating people in groups of the same national background, but within which grouping people may never have met their fellow countrymen from other regions or social classes. The number of people per tent differs depending on the size of the tent. Some interlocutors said their tents had around twenty-five pilgrims whilst other tents accommodated more than a hundred people each. When they stay in Minā, pilgrims have the chance to learn about each other's lives and develop friendships. In this way, Moroccans also become aware of ethnic differences within their own county. Here is what Samiya told me about meeting other Moroccans in Mecca:

> During Hajj, I met with Moroccans from all around the country. I realized how those from Rabat are different from those of Marrakech or Fes… We are not only Arabs, but we mingled with different Amazigh groups: *riyafa* [the Riff people inhabiting the plains], *jebala* [the mountain people], and *soussi* [people of the Middle Atlas]… It is rare to see in one place, even in Morocco, a mixed group of people like that…

The appreciation of national diversity and belonging is often manifested in the conditions that Moroccans face during Hajj. Muna, a woman I visited in Casablanca upon her return from Hajj, told me about an incident that happened in Mecca:

> One day, as I was trying to return to my hotel, I lost the way. It was after *'ishā'* [evening prayers] and I was alone. As I walked down one dark street, I got worried that I had lost my way… Suddenly, a man stopped his car next to me and approached me in Moroccan *dārīja*, 'Sister, do you need

> help?' he said… He recognized me by my white *jellaba*… He was Moroccan! I felt relieved… He showed me the way back to the hotel and made sure I was safe.

For Muna, the Moroccan dress was a mark of distinction, a way to identify as Moroccan among people from different backgrounds. When in Mecca, many Moroccans ensure their distinctiveness primarily though dress code. In particular, Moroccans can be easily identified through the *jellaba*, a long, hooded coat worn by men and women.[167] Women's *jellaba*s, often white, are worn during the Hajj and *ʿumra* rituals and the rest of time they spend in Mecca. Hanan, the local tailor from Fes whom I introduced in Chapter Three, for example, makes Moroccan *jellaba*s specially for the Hajj and *ʿumra* season. She sells some in Morocco and carries some to sell in Mecca when she travels there for *ʿumra* once or twice a year. Some women told me that on the way to Mecca they were encouraged to buy a black *ʿabāya* instead of their white *jellaba*s.[168] While some women bought and wore black dresses in Mecca, the majority remained in their traditional clothes which were a clear marker of their Moroccan identity. The aforementioned Muna, for example, told the women who visited her that she had bought a black *ʿabāya* which she wore in Mecca after she performed the Hajj. She added: "I carried my Moroccan *jellaba* in a bag and as soon as I reached the airport leaving Saudi Arabia, I put my Moroccan clothes back on before getting on the flight back to Morocco."

According to Jenkins, the interplay of categorization and collective self-definition (the recognition or joint construction of sameness among group members) is at the basis of collective identities (Jenkins, 2008). Although Muna recognized the diversity of Moroccans she met in Mecca, like several other Moroccans, she pointed out that Moroccans were distinct from other groups of pilgrims, thus illustrating that by defining sameness, group members automatically define what

[167] Moroccan men often wear traditional clothing and leather slippers outside the period of *iḥrām*.

[168] The *ʿabāya* cloak is a simple, loose over-garment, essentially a robe-like dress, often black in color, worn by some women in some Muslim societies including Saudi Arabia.

differentiates them from other groups (cf. Jenkins 1997; Polletta and Jasper 2001).

The recognition of a sense of national group harmony, does not mean, however, that pilgrims necessarily close ranks and feel superior to other ethnic groups. Stories about the Hajj often include positive and negative judgements on the perceived characteristics of pilgrims from other nationalities. In my conversations with Moroccan pilgrims, there seemed to be a clear suggestion that some pilgrims of other nationalities are praiseworthy. To illustrate this point, Hassan, whom I met in Safi, shared photos of the Hajj, including the following one with the Arabic caption which I translate below:

Translation: "We return one more time to the Muslims of Southeast Asia who are well organized, well mannered, and performed the rites with humility. Even when they left hotels they were impressive in their organization; their bags organized and they sit in the buses while their bags get organized without disorder or troubles. Salute to those people whose officials invested in the human. May God help those with whose language the Qur'an was revealed."

Figure 33: Facebook post shared by a pilgrim
(Shared via Facebook, Safi, 28/11/2018)

Although Hassan was both fascinated and impressed by Southeast Asian pilgrims, he was, by contrast, more critical of Arab pilgrims. Similar comparisons were made by other Moroccans including Muna as mentioned earlier. Moroccan pilgrims often reflected on which groups behaved more appropriately, who were the ones who enjoyed better services and which groups were less fortunate than the Moroccan pilgrims. Such debates tend to resolve themselves with the conclusion that Moroccans are positioned somewhere in the middle. Upon their return from Mecca, many Moroccans would say, in gatherings with family members or friends: "Thank God that I am Moroccan!"

As if conscious that others will also be making evaluations and comparisons, whilst in Mecca, the pilgrims seek to present a bright, positive image of their country. Many Moroccans told me that the once-in-a-lifetime Hajj is not only a religious duty, but also a unique opportunity to present a positive image of Morocco to the world. Muna, for example, spoke about how her behavior was meant to be exemplary not only because she was in the state of *iḥrām*, but also because her behavior reflected the image of her country. In this way, Muna echoed the message of the king by being an "ambassador" of Morocco in Mecca.

Following the completion of the Hajj rituals, many pilgrims expressed their longing to return home. This was how Rashid from Mohammedia – whom I introduced in Chapter Four – put it:

> When you go somewhere away, you miss your mother… You might be at the best place in the whole world but still, nowhere would compensate for your mother… My homeland is like my mother. I recognize the importance of going to Mecca; I always long to go and perform Hajj and *ʿumra*; yet I always rush back to my family here… When I am home, I miss Mecca and look forward to the next visit. Yet, once I am in Mecca, I feel longing for my country… So, I return.

Longing for Morocco is not necessarily a longing for the same Morocco that is propagated through state messages. Expressing opinions about the monarchy and the state is very risky in Morocco, so to protect my interlocutors I have not pursued the issue of what dimensions of Moroccan identity they valued, and had missed, so dearly. It is safe,

however, to quote Hassan who asserted that the noblest of people are the ones who are most pious. In a way Hassan was referring to a verse from the Qurʾan: "People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware" (Qurʾan 49, 13).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the pilgrimage to Mecca is not only an enormous religious event in Morocco but also an occasion for reinforcing the sense of national identity in the official discourse of the Moroccan government and an opportunity for Moroccans to reflect on their own identity and their sense of belonging to their homeland.

At the level of official discourse, Morocco is ruled by a constitutional monarchy which claims legitimacy through its genealogical descent from the prophet Muhammad, implying overtly that its ruling representative is also *amīr al-muʾminīn*, the successor to the Prophet's religious and secular authority. In the official discourse, the pilgrimage is a force that is used to help strengthen national unity and is seen as an opportunity to reassert the religious authority of the monarchy. Moroccan pilgrims are urged to see themselves as the ambassadors of their country, embodying its identity and civilization as well as the values in which they are grounded, namely, the unity of the *umma* and also epitomizing communal coherence and a commitment to the ideals of moderation and balance.

Most pilgrims willingly accept the ambassadorial role because it resonates with their pre-existing sense of national identity and therefore is not an imposition so much as a validation of national pride. This role also provides an opportunity to demonstrate the qualities of Morocco to the wider *umma*, for example by being recognized as Moroccans in Mecca because of their *jellaba*, which is, indeed, a sign of their Moroccan identity. However, my research suggests that this should not be interpreted as necessarily weakening the concept of *umma* – after all the

possibility of unity across boundaries is a central aspiration of the faith of Islam. Pilgrims relish encounters with people of other regions, who may even speak other languages, and seek to communicate as best they can, exemplifying their commitment to religious unity. The stories of my interlocutors also suggest that whilst valuing the *umma* and its expression of global solidarity and harmony, most Moroccan pilgrims still appear to prioritize the strong identification they feel with a national sub-group of that *umma*. Arguably, the very organization of the Hajj, with an accommodation strategy that arranges pilgrims into national groups inevitably also leans in that direction, even if one must acknowledge the logic of such arrangements on a practical level. Thus, although the Hajj gives pilgrims the opportunity to express, produce and reinforce Muslim unity on the one hand, on the other the pilgrimage also stimulates its own subtle reflections on the question of belonging, both on a national and personal level.

CHAPTER SIX

Saudi Hajj Management through Moroccan Eyes

For you (Medina) I have ardent love,
And a yearning in my heart;
I have a vow – if I fill my eyes with those
walls and places where [the Prophet] walked,
then my turbaned grey head will be covered
with dust from so much kissing!
Had it not been for obstacles and enemies,
I would always visit them,
even if I were to be dragged upon my feet
(Qadī ʿAyyāḍ)[169]

Introduction

Two weeks before this day, *al-ḥājj* Salah, a respected old man who works for a local travel agency in Casablanca, had invited me to join him at a special event. Travel agencies concerned with organizing *ʿumra* trips for the coming season of the hijri year of 1437 were meeting in a grand hotel in Casablanca to discuss the preparations for the *ʿumra* trips, accommodation offers in Mecca and Medina, and engagements with Saudi agents in what he called a "Hajj exhibition." Thankful for the offer, I gladly accepted. Then, ten days later, when I called *al-ḥājj* Salah to confirm the time and location of the event, he informed me that all Moroccan travel agencies had agreed to boycott the event which would, as a result, probably be postponed for the time being. He did not want to add more, but I soon understood what his cryptic comments had alluded to, when I heard rumors that the Saudi government was issuing new regulations concerning the Hajj and *ʿumra*.

[169] Qadī ʿAyyāḍ was a judge and scholar of Maliki law. He is also known as one of the seven saints of Marrakech. He was the author of *Al-shifāʾ*, a famous handbook in which prophet Muhammad's life, his qualities and his miracles are described in every detail. The quoted passage at the beginning of this chapter is from a longer poem in the book.

In order to learn more about these recent developments concerning Hajj and *ʿumra* regulations, I paid a visit to *al-ḥājj* Salah's office at the travel agency which is located in one of Casablanca's busy neighborhoods. A small red taxi dropped me in front of the agency around 10:00 AM. The agency consisted of one large room containing three desks; the first two were occupied by two young women and the third was where *al-ḥājj* Salah normally sat. Two small flat-screen TVs were tuned to a satellite TV-channel podcasting live footage from the Grand Mosque of Mecca accompanied with recitation of the Qurʾan. On the wall, there were several printed images of the Petronas Twin Towers of Malaysia, the Taj Mahal, The Grand Mosque of Mecca, the Colosseum of Rome, The Dome of the Rock of Jerusalem, and the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina - all, I realized, icons of religious and tourist sites for affluent Muslims, the target customers of the travel agency. I greeted the women and *al-ḥājj* Salah, who invited me to sit. Immediately he handed me a copy of the newspaper, *al-Ṣabāḥ* (Arabic for morning).[170] He pointed to the following key passage:

Figure 34: Newspaper report about *ʿumra* fees in the daily newspaper (Casablanca, 05/10/2016)

Translation:

■ ***ʿumra*:** Moroccan travel agencies were taken by surprise by a royal decree of king Salman bin Abdul-Aziz, which imposed a fee of 2,000 riyals (around 5,300 Moroccan dirhams [500 Euros]) on any pilgrim travelling to the kingdom to perform the religious rituals for a second time…. This step has upset the officials concerned in Morocco because of the effect it will leave on the marketing of *ʿumra* offers in Morocco and other countries. The fees for *ʿumra* will increase during the coming period.

[170] According to Moroccan interlocutors, *al-Ṣabāḥ* is a daily Arabic language Moroccan newspaper owned by Ecomedias, a Moroccan media company partially owned by several businesspeople and whose editorial line is pro-government.

Al-ḥājj Salah said that this news was the reason that the National Federation of Travel Agencies of Morocco (FNAVM) decided to boycott *ʿumra* trips following the Saudi decision, hoping that eventually the Saudi authorities would abolish the new fees to help Muslims perform *ʿumra* and not to place more obstacles in their path.

From a conversation between *al-ḥājj* Salah and his colleague, Suha, I learned that Egyptian travel agents had also decided to boycott Hajj exhibitions and, with the cooperation of the Foreign Ministry, to form committees that would travel to Saudi Arabia, seeking to overturn this decision. Suha mentioned that people even called for a boycott of the Hajj itself, pending resolution of the issue. Pilgrims deserved better treatment, she argued, and there were concerns about the Saudi management of the Hajj, even extending to questions of whether the holy sites were being destroyed. There was an overarching sense that the changes brought about over the last decades were regrettable and that people – according to Suha – looked back with nostalgia to a time when "pilgrims were guests of God," and not a source of funding for Saudi Arabia. [171]

This chapter deals with how, in relation to the Hajj, Moroccans reflect on Saudi Arabia not only as the country that is home to the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, but also as a state whose governance administers and shapes the pilgrimage experience. It is well known to Moroccans that because of Hajj, Mecca has become the spiritual center for the Muslims who aspire to an ideal of unity and solidarity (cf. Rippin and Bernheimer 2018; Cragg and Speight 1980, 60). When in Mecca and Medina, Muslims do not only perform the rites of Hajj and *ʿumra*. They also pray, associate with each other and visit various sacred sites that are significant in the history of the Islamic tradition. The Hajj, as Bianchi puts it, is a year-long cycle of planning and preparation which include finance, education, transportation, accommodation, and celebration (Bianchi 2004, 4). Whenever possible, travelers to Mecca combine worship with non-

[171] Fieldnotes, 05/10/2016.

religious activities such as business, tourism, study, and job seeking (Bianchi 2007).

Thus, the total experience of the pilgrimage is more complex and includes far more profane matters than the religious duties involved. During my fieldwork, I heard many stories from Moroccans who discussed their ambivalence about the pilgrimage experience. On the one hand, pilgrims recognize the pilgrimage as a 'once in a lifetime experience' and recognize themselves as the 'guests of God' in Mecca, as they put it. At the same time, they discussed having to deal with the bureaucracy of the Hajj management and the Saudi model of governance whilst in Mecca.

J. E. Campo, in *The Other Sides of Paradise: Explorations into the Religious Meanings of Domestic Space in Islam* examines the interrelationship of political authority, ritual, and spatial order in the context of the history of Islam, showing how pilgrimage rituals embody and validate configurations of power, of dominance and submission (Campo 1991). He argues that Muslim rulers have used the holy places in Mecca and the rites of pilgrimage to demonstrate and exercise power over their subjects. Today, the pilgrimage continues to be a site of power as Saudi Arabia controls the management of the Hajj (Dorsey 2017; Law 2015). Moreover, by adopting a fiercely autocratic posture on pilgrimage policy, it is no surprise that the Saudi government is the one to be blamed when pilgrims are not satisfied with their pilgrimage experience (cf. Sardar 2014)

In Morocco, I heard of many concerns related to the control and influence of the Saudi state over the pilgrimage experience on both religious and political fronts. Although Mecca and Medina (together with Jerusalem) are the holiest places for Moroccans and Hajj symbolizes the unity of the Muslims, nevertheless the religious style of many pilgrims is at variance with that which they found in Saudi Arabia. There were occasions when Moroccans complained not only about the fees of the Hajj, but its management (or sometimes mismanagement), the way they – as Moroccans – were treated when they performed Hajj or *'umra,* and their disagreement with certain Saudi policies, mainly those that

contradict a specifically Moroccan understanding of certain attitudes, values and practices related to the relative importance of holy sites and shrines.

In his classical work on Hajj, James Piscatori tells us that for most Westerners, but not for a great many Muslims, Saudi Arabia evokes, "an image of Islam itself" (1983, 56). I take this statement as my point of departure to argue that, for many Moroccans, the pilgrimage to Mecca is an experience that makes pilgrims, and to a similar extent those at home, question the image of Islam that Saudi Arabia evokes. Studies of the Saudi state often emphasize the merging of religion and politics in general within the state (cf. Vogel 2002, 2000; Bligh 1985).[172] In many instances, sites of pilgrimage are also places of power dynamics (Eade and Sallnow 1991; Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Turner and Turner 1978). This is especially the case concerning the management of the holy cities Mecca and Medina in what Ronald McIntyre referred to as the business of "upholding of pristine purity of the Wahhabi faith" (McIntyre 1981, as quoted in Salamé 1987, 306). Moroccans often contrasted this Saudi approach to Islam with their own Maliki doctrine and the Sufi heritage that is very much celebrated by most of those I met during the whole time of my fieldwork in Morocco (cf. Al-Rasheed 2007, 57).

Among Moroccans, there is a great deal of disagreement with regard to Saudi Arabia itself and the relationship between Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries. Moroccan pilgrims' own experiences cannot but make them reflect on these matters, although not everybody does so to the same extent. Therefore, in this chapter I will address how Moroccan pilgrims position themselves vis-a-vis the Saudi 'mode of domination', to use Pierre Bourdieu's term (Bourdieu 1990, 122-134). They experience Saudi control at every level of the Hajj experience, from the lottery selection, through to the accommodations and down to the very issue of who is permitted access to which sites. This Saudi interpretation of Islam, on many occasions, contradicts with widely shared Moroccan understandings of various issues related to the

[172] For more information on Saudi politics, see, for example, Vogel (2000), Nevo (1998), Nehme (1994), Kechichian (1986), Al-Yasini (1985), and Bligh (1985).

pilgrimage, and the expectations and aspirations of specific groups of Moroccan pilgrims including women who face additional restrictions.[173]

For all Muslims, Mecca and Medina are the most important sites of the *umma*, which, ideally – many Moroccans would argue – should fall under the leadership of the whole Muslim community, rather than the government of one country which imposes its own interpretation of Islam on all activities in Mecca and Medina (cf. Bianchi 2007). I argue that, in Mecca, pilgrims find themselves in a complex web of relations where they experience the domination of the state, solidarity among pilgrims, cooperation, conflict, debate and contestation. In line with Foucault's observation that *place* is fundamental in any exercise of power, Mecca is not only a spiritual and religious place for Muslims but also a location that has been politicized through various human agencies. In fact, Eickelman and Piscatori attempt to summarize this by stating that Muslim politics is a process of "competition and contest over both the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions, formal and informal, that produce and sustain them" (1996, 5).

Before discussing the stories and narratives of Moroccan pilgrims relating to the main theme of this chapter, I will provide a brief historical analysis of Saudi control over the pilgrimage itself and the major changes that have taken place since the 1900s in the ruling powers of the region once known as the Hijaz. I then discuss specific examples of Saudi control over the Hajj – as illustrated by Moroccan pilgrims' narratives – starting with the redevelopment of Mecca and the changes in the holy sites, before proceeding to discuss how Moroccans reflect on the Saudi control over religious practices in Mecca in the third section. In the fourth section, I discuss how Moroccans reflect on the accidents and human loss happening in Mecca at the time of pilgrimage. Finally, I discuss how Moroccans reflect on Saudi policies and politics in relation to the management of the pilgrimage.

[173] See Chapter Three for narratives of Moroccan women on visiting the Prophet's Mosque and Chapter Eight for detailed narratives on women's experience of the Hajj.

Contestations of the sacred in Saudi Arabia

The origins of the modern Saudi state date back to the early 1900s, when Ibn Saud retook Riyadh in order to re-establish his ancestors' realm (Goldberg 2013). [174] In October 1924, the forces of Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud captured Mecca, which inaugurated a new era in the relationship between pilgrimage and Saudi authority (McLoughlin 1993).[175] After becoming the acknowledged ruler, Ibn Saud swore that he would rule in accordance with religious law, thus offering reassurance to prospective pilgrims throughout the Muslim world and the local Meccan establishment (Hobday 1979). In 1932, Saudi Arabia was established as a kingdom by king Abd al-Aziz. Much of the Arabian peninsula was politically unified by 1932 in the third and current Saudi state, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.[176] The present regime is particularly interested in the holy places, as can be seen from the change in the honorific address of present rulers, from only 'king' into also 'the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' or *khādim al-ḥaramayn*, in 1986.[177]

As Eickelman and Piscatori note, politics become Muslim by "the invocation of ideas and symbols, which Muslims in different contexts identify as Islamic/ in support of... organized claims and counter-claims" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, 4). Arguably, Saudi Arabia's monarchy,

[174] In 1901 king Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Faisal al-Saud (Ibn Saud) conquered the city of Riyadh. From 1909 through to 1926, king Abd al-Aziz extended his authority over most of Arabia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia officially acquired its present name in September 1932. In 1953 king Abd al-Aziz passed away and his son took over the leadership (Safran 1988, 73). For more on the history of Saudi Arabia, see Safran and Hobday (1979).

[175] Ibn Saud chose to enter Mecca dressed as a pilgrim in 1924 to perform *ʿumra*, but on 8 January 1926 he was installed as king of the Hijaz (McLoughlin 1993).

[176] A full analysis of the development of the Wahhabi doctrine and political discourse from its eighteenth-century origins to its current incarnation(s) is beyond the scope of this thesis. For more information on this topic, see Al Rasheed (2007, 22-58) and Niblock (2006, 23- 27) among others.

[177] The first king of Saudi Arabia to assume the title was Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (1906–1975). His successor Khalid did not use the title, but the latter's successor Fahd did, replacing the term His Majesty with it. The king Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, took the same title after the death of king Abdullah, his half-brother, on 23 January 2015.

exercising as it does secular power in the material realm, has also extended and asserted to its own advantage its claim to religious authority by means of its appropriation and exclusive control of ideas and symbols related to Hajj and the holy sites.

Through the assertion of the authority of the king as 'The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques', the Saudi government has been responsible for overseeing the well-being of millions of pilgrims from all countries since the end of World War II. Many measures were taken to facilitate the pilgrimage including rebuilding and expansion works in and around the Grand Mosque of Mecca and in Medina. In 1962, the Ministry of Pilgrimage and Endowments was created to take the primary responsibility for the organization of the Hajj. Yet, there is hardly a ministry in the Saudi government that is not involved in the management of the pilgrimage (Bianchi 2004). Nevertheless, it's also true that other interested groups - travel agents, politicians, and other institutes - contribute to running the day-to-day implementation of Hajj policy and are also involved in the service planning and delivery before, during and after the pilgrimage (Ibid).

For many years, Saudi claims of exclusive sovereignty over the holy cities was met with demands for reform of the Hajj management by individual pilgrims, travel groups, and governments of Muslim majority countries. Proposals for reform included the establishment of collective management of the Hajj by all Muslim countries under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (Bianchi 2017). Saudi rulers seemed to agree to this proposal in light of the challenges posed by the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Iran pilgrimage boycott in the late 1980s (Bianchi 2004).[178] However, when Iran ended its pilgrimage boycott in 1991, the Saudis backtracked on pledges to foster an international regime for Hajj management (Amiri et al. 2011). Instead, they embarked on a rapid expansion of the pilgrimage sites and a

[178] Iran boycotted the Hajj for three years, from 1988 to 1990 following cuts of diplomatic relations after the 1987 Mecca incident when a demonstration by Iranian pilgrims resulted on stampede after Saudi security opened fire on protesters (cf. Benjamin 2018).

thorough remodeling of Mecca's landscape including demolishing most of the city's ancient quarters and working-class districts and replacing them with luxury hotels and shopping malls that were beyond the reach of ordinary pilgrims (Bianchi 2004). If the intention of the changes was to lessen the risks involved for pilgrims to the site, then the results have not been conclusive: the dangers and tragedies of the Hajj have continued, including stampedes, accidents and deaths among pilgrims.

The following section reflects on how Moroccans living in Morocco view the developments in Mecca, starting with a sense of nostalgia for 'what once was there' and the inevitable comparison between the past and the present in the Hajj experience.

The expansion of the Grand Mosque and the contraction of equality

The following encounter took place in Fes, as I joined Nuha, one of my interlocutors, at a family event, a female gathering and a henna party for one of her cousins.[179] Henna parties are a time of festivity when women enjoy a gathering characterized by singing, dancing, food and celebration at the house of the bride before the day of the wedding. During the party, the bride is visited by a traditional henna artist who paints intricate designs on her hands and feet. Nuha's cousin, close family members and friends were invited to come together to share a meal preceding the party.[180] Samira, a young cousin in her thirties, welcomed us at the door and led us to the room where a group of women sat. I recognized Salma, a relative in her sixties and Latifa, an aunt in her seventies. After greeting the women in the room, we sat at the same table as Latifa and Salma, together with six other women. We were first offered some milk and dates followed by salads. Soon, large plates of cooked chicken and more

[179] A henna party refers to a ceremony held one day before a wedding normally at the home of the bride. During a henna party, artists use a paste made from dried henna leaves (a reddish-brown dye) to paint intricate patterns (temporary tattoos) on the hands and sometimes also the feet of the bride. The bride's friends and relatives who are involved in the marriage can also get to have henna tattoos. Henna is considered a sign of fertility and beauty (Kelly Spurles 2004).
[180] For most Moroccan families this is the main meal of the day.

salads followed. Samira joined our table and asked her eldest aunt if she had heard about the new visa charges for Hajj and *ʿumra*. The conversation went something like this:

> **Muna:** Yes! I heard in the news. The rule applies to you if you have been [to Hajj or *ʿumra* in the past].
>
> **Nuha:** It seems that Saudi [government] is using that holy place for business now!
>
> **Salma:** I remember when I went to *ʿumra* last year; I was bothered by the evil look of that clock tower. It makes the mosque look tiny.
>
> **Samira:** It is the only thing one notices when entering Mecca; I thought the mosque will be the most iconic monument… I was wrong!
>
> **Nuha:** I remember when I went to Hajj many years ago, we stayed in a simple hotel, now there are big fancy hotels…
>
> **Samiya:** Some people say that if you stay at one of the hotels in the clock tower, you do not even need to leave your room; you can pray there and it is considered part of the square of the Grand Mosque…
>
> **Muna:** But only the rich can enjoy these hotels!
>
> **Samira:** My mother says that people used to see the Kaʿba when they were still far away… I couldn't see it until I was at the mosque when it was actually in front of me…
>
> **Muna:** They claim that they want to make Hajj better; but I think they are not! All these destructions of sites where the Prophet lived in Mecca and Medina, where the Companions lived, and where the history of Muslims was… All destroyed!
>
> **Samira:** A neighbor of mine was in Mecca when a crane collapsed [on 11 September 2015] in the Grand Mosque… There were a lot of deaths… She was saved and thanked God that nothing happened to her…
>
> **Salma:** The sight of these cranes over the heads of pilgrims is scary…
>
> **Smira:** One woman heard that the expansion project will continue for fifteen more years… putting the pilgrims in danger for the sake of these plans. *ḥshūma… ḥshūma* [shame… Shame on them!]

> **Nuha:** They behave as if Hajj is only theirs… Hajj belongs to all Muslims…
>
> **Muna:** I was hoping to go to *ʿumra* next Ramadan… But, I am afraid that I would be praying and at the same time scared that something might fall on me at any moment…
>
> **Samira:** They claim to safeguard the holy sanctuaries; the call themselves *custodians* but at the same time they engage in the destruction of the history of Islam and replace holy sites with Western hotels… It just does not make sense!

In their conversation, the women revealed several aspects of the dissatisfaction of the pilgrims with the current management of the Hajj. The first issue is the new construction around the Grand Mosque of Mecca as part of the expansion projects that make way for further pilgrimage-related infrastructure.[181] Under the redevelopment discourse, the Saudi government justifies the expansion on the grounds that improving the conditions for pilgrims is an exemplary duty of the 'Custodian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries'. The development project is justified – according to my interlocutors – under the pretext of increasing capacity particularly for the circumambulation of the Kaʿba during pilgrimage. Pilgrims question the benefits of and even the need for such projects, commenting in particular on their grandiose nature. It is not only pilgrims who contest the expansion project, but the project is part of an ongoing debate in various media in Morocco and in other countries (cf. Al-Alawi 2006, 15)

As the annual Hajj continues to draw larger crowds year after year, the Saudi authorities deem it necessary to raze to the ground large tracts of formerly residential neighborhoods around the two important mosques in Mecca and Medina to make way for pilgrimage-related infrastructure. The development and expansion of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, however, meant the removal of architectural heritage sites designed by the Abbasids and the Ottomans. Speaking to Moroccan pilgrims about the expansion work in Mecca and Medina, pilgrims

[181] Expansion of the mosque began in 2011 with an estimate of 13 billion dollars. The plans of expansion include widening the area of the mosque by 400,000 square meters to allow for an increase of 1.2 million worshippers (Ferrari and Benzo 2014, 323).

mentioned many places which they were able to visit in the past that no longer exist.[182] Despite vocal protests from Muslims from all over the world as well as governments in Muslim majority countries, the destruction continued. The current expansion project is the fourth extension project in the history of modern Saudi Arabia.

The expansion of the Grand Mosque itself is seen as an impressive phenomenon by many Moroccans. Nuha, for example, described the Grand Mosque itself as a "happy place" to which she "will always be happy to return." The other women, however, expressed their fear that such expansion of the Grand Mosque and the modernization of its surroundings might influence its spirituality and the feelings pilgrims enjoy when they visit the holy place.

One fear that Moroccan pilgrims expressed with regard to the modernization of the surroundings of the Grand Mosque of Mecca was focused on the clock tower, the grand mark of development directly adjacent to the Grand Mosque in the *abrāj al-bayt* (Arabic for the Towers of the House [of God]) endowment complex. *Abrāj al-bayt* is another real estate development project that is greatly transforming the landscape around the Grand Mosque of Mecca. The construction of *abrāj al-bayt* meant the destruction of many old buildings surrounding the Grand Mosque. For example, Ajyad Fortress, an eighteenth-century Ottoman citadel, was demolished to make room for the new buildings.[183] These changes caused by the Meccan expansion project did not proceed without being questioned. For example, in addition to the pilgrims, the Turkish government protested against the destruction of the fortress, according *al-ḥājj* Salah, who was introduced at the beginning of this chapter. Despite objections to the project, the towers were built as part of a megamall complex of seven skyscraper hotels, shopping centers and restaurants.

The size, significance and view of the clock tower in particular is a continuous topic of discussion among Moroccans who have been to

[182] See, for example, an article by a vocal opponent of the destruction of historical sites: Irfan al-Alawi (2006).
[183] Information provided by Moroccan interlocutors.

Mecca. For example, in the gathering of the women mentioned here above, Samira expressed her dissatisfaction with the way the clock tower "looms over the mosque" and Salma personified the edifice, possibly transferring to the building the hostility she felt towards those who caused it to be built, complaining that the tower makes the mosque look small in its shadow and had an evil appearance. Other interlocutors expressed similar concerns. For example, *al-ḥājj* Salah stated:

> The Kaʿba is the House of God; it is the place that should take the center stage for pilgrims… What is most iconic now, however, is the clock tower… The *abrāj,* [towers] loom over the Masjid al-Ḥarām in an ostentatious show of luxury that stands in stark contrast to the piety and history symbolized by the Kaʿba… In the past, I could capture the sense of awe upon the arrival of pilgrims and seeing the Kaʿba... Now, I am afraid that people will remember the towers and get distracted from the spirituality of the site…

For many Moroccans, the Meccan clock tower stands as a symbol of the increasing disparity between rich and poor in Islam's holiest city. In the women's conversation, Latifa expressed a fear that the new buildings, including those in the tours, target a certain class of Muslims, prioritizing material wealth and position above spiritual commitment.

I also met people, however, who could afford the expenses of the new hotels and clearly benefited from their services. One example is Rashid, the businessman from Mohammedia introduced in Chapter Four, who first performed the Hajj in 1988 and again in 2012. On his second Hajj, Rashid found Mecca to be very different from the city as he had seen it in 1988. He told me that he liked the modern hotels, shopping centers, and restaurants. Together with his wife, he stayed in one of the hotels in the clock tower and went to the Grand Mosque only at the time of prayers to perform them with the rest of pilgrims.

Most Moroccan pilgrims, though, shared the less favorable view expressed by *al-ḥājj* Salah and the women at the henna party. The rapid influx of capitalist investment in Mecca and Medina has led many Moroccans to believe that money and economic growth, rather than the wellbeing of pilgrims, are the ultimate reason for the expansion work

undertaken by the Saudi authorities.[184] For example, in addition to the *abrāj al-bayt* project, a second – and even larger – real estate development project in Mecca is that of Jabal ʻUmar, which is currently being constructed and will include around forty residential towers including two five-star hotels and six three-star hotels (Egan 2013).

Figure 35: Image from Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's *Mekka* (1888)

Figure 36: Current image of Mecca showing *abrāj al-bayt* project (2016)

[184] For examples of media coverage concerning the destruction of monuments in Mecca and Medina see Egan (2013) and Peer (2012, 74).

During my second *ʿumra* trip to Mecca, I experienced a moment which acquired epiphanic or symbolic significance for me with regard to this increasing divide between rich and poor pilgrims when I saw the construction site of Jabal ʿUmar. Huge billboards were hiding the construction and advertising the apartment buildings which will be constructed in the area. One picture, for example, showed a young man praying in front of a glass window from which he has a direct view of the Kaʿba and the Grand Mosque of Mecca. As I took a picture of the billboard, two women in colorful dresses came and sat on the side of the street on the pavement in front of the picture. Next to them a woman and a child also sat on the street.

Figure 37: Two women sitting in front of new construction advertisement (Mecca, 9/02/2018)

When I later showed the picture to Fawziyya, a 43-year old Moroccan woman who performed the Hajj in 2016, she commented: "Will there be a place for those two women inside of that [apartment building]?"

Abrāj al-bayt project is also known as the king Abdul Aziz Endowment Project. Moroccan pilgrims spoke sarcastically about the religious endowment, *waqf*, and the nature of the project. The reason for the sharply critical comments is that some people found that the construction of the towers contradicts the idea of endowment as they understand the term. Here is what *al-ḥājj* Salah had to say about it:

> The new towers are considered *waqf* which means that their profit should go for the benefit of Muslims. However, most of the hotels in the Clock Tower are Western Hotels: the Fairmont, the Movenpick, the Swiss hotel… All are Western-for-profit hotels… How much of their profit is actually going to Muslims?

Thus, Salah was critical of what he saw as a misappropriation of a Muslim religious or charitable purpose, *waqf*, and its application to a commercial, for-profit oriented project, with little benefit – if any – to Muslims.[185] Moroccan pilgrims also attribute a profane motive to these building projects in the holy sites: they think that through the expansion projects, Saudi Arabia is looking to diversify its economy so that it is not so dependent on oil revenue – particularly now, with its war on Yemen, there is a need for additional sources of income.[186] The Saudi government, therefore, wants to allow more pilgrims to travel to Mecca each year.[187] The worries of Moroccan pilgrims, additionally, have a financial aspect. In the introductory section, *al-ḥājj* Salah and his colleague discuss the issue of the rising fees of Hajj and *ʿumra*, something that many Moroccans expressed. Later on, I will address how Moroccans

[185] In general, 'the West' was often associated with non-Muslims in the conversations I witnessed.

[186] Saudi effort to diversify its economy beyond the oil revenues can also be seen within the global quest for alternatives to fossil fuel; yet this topic has not come up in the discussions I witnessed among Moroccans.

[187] According to Moroccan travel agents, the tourist visa policy does not extend to Mecca and Medina but rather only to the non-holy areas. Saudi Arabia also announced in September 2019 that it will begin offering visas to non-religious tourists. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/27/saudi-arabia-offer-tourist-visas-for-first-time

discuss the religious reasoning behind the destruction of houses and graves. First, however, I will discuss the financial aspect.

Costs of Hajj and ʿumra: issues of access

"The high-rise complexes and luxury hotels have changed the experience of Hajj for rich pilgrims, while poorer pilgrims find it increasingly difficult to afford lodgings," *al-ḥājj* Salah told me during another visit to his office at the travel agency. For many Moroccan pilgrims, the new construction around Mecca stands as a symbol of the increasing disparity between rich and poor in Islam's holiest city and poses questions in the minds of pilgrims about the values of equality and simplicity within the pilgrimage and its rites. According to *al-ḥājj* Salah, the cost of Hajj has been increasing over the last years, making the pilgrimage unaffordable for ordinary people:[188]

> When people go on Hajj, they want to answer the call of God… To visit His house... The new high-rise five-star hotels surrounding the Kaʿba are available to those who can afford them… The more money you have, the closer you can be to the mosque and the better services you get…

The essence of Hajj, for many Moroccan pilgrims, lies in creating equality between all people. This equality is symbolized by the act of *iḥrām* when all pilgrims dress in modesty and when they perform the same rites. The current trend, however, is "making equality a distant dream," as I was told by Samira when she commented on the current management of the Hajj:

> In the past, people paid a few thousand dirhams to go to Hajj … When my mother went on Hajj in 2016, she paid around 47,000 dirhams [around 4,700 Euros]; excluding spending money… What would she have done if she had not had the means?

[188] One can question if Hajj was ever actually within the reach of ordinary people – given the hardships the journey would have entailed. In the past for example, pilgrims had to travel for a long time to reach Mecca and even today the ability to perform the Hajj means mobilizing financial resources. See also the 'Pilgrimage of the Poor' in Chapter Eight.

Many of my interlocutors spoke about advantages the rich have over the poor in services and accommodation in Mecca and criticized signs of inequality. Many pilgrims, for example, told me stories about times when they saw discrimination towards those less privileged.

Figure 38: Worker at a hotel in Mecca offering guests cardamom flavored Zamzam water (Mecca, 10/02/2018)[189]

Al-ḥājj Salah told me the story of a woman being forcefully removed from the Prophet's Mosque in Medina for begging:

> I think it was around 100 meters from the tomb of the Prophet. I saw a woman who looked Asian – maybe Bengali – and two Saudi police were dragging her over the floor and her little daughter was crying… I tried to help; I told them they should treat the woman more humanely. They told me to mind my business… I told them, 'this place was where the Prophet, Umar, Ali, and other Companions passed, and you drag a woman around it like this...' They told me it was

[189] I took the picture when I visited one of the hotels in *abrāj al-bayt* to explore the view from its restaurant directly on the Grand Mosque of Mecca. I was offered free Zamzam water (cardamom flavored), dates and coffee as a guest (10/02/2018).

> forbidden to beg in that spot... I swear I cried! I was sad and angry!

Al-ḥājj Salah also told me:

> In olden times, people would travel on camels for months and ran a risk of death during the Hajj journey… Yet, there were fewer restrictions on the Hajj … It felt more spiritual in the past… Now there is an obsession with the best tower, the tallest building, the fanciest hotel… They turned Mecca into a show of modernity…[190]

According to *al-ḥājj* Salah, one crucial aspect of the price of such modernity, however, is a continuous destruction of many historical sites that are considered valuable for Muslims in general, not just for Moroccan pilgrims. In the next section, I discuss some of the destruction that took place in Mecca in order to make space for the development projects.

Destruction of graves and historical sites

In my conversation with *al-ḥājj* Salah, he talked about the sacrifice that had had to be made in order for the development work in Mecca to take place, namely the destruction of ancient sites in order to establish new ones in their place. The already mentioned Ottoman citadel which stood on a hill overlooking the Grand Mosque of Mecca, the Ajyad Fortress, is one example of the destruction taking place in Mecca. However, not all demolitions are viewed as 'destructive' or a negative act; for instance, the Ajyad Fortress being removed did not seem to hold religious or spiritual significance for Moroccan pilgrims. In contrast, many other sites were highly significant, mainly those related to the history of Islam in Mecca and the life of the Prophet and his Companions. The destruction of such historical sites raised many questions among Moroccans: What discussion took place among religious scholars that allowed the destruction of the cemeteries and other sites to take place? Why were

[190] On the debate about the use of wealth among pilgrims see the conversation between Yassin and Ayyub in Chapter Two.

they destroyed? And – as many Moroccans told me: "How would the Prophet see the current changes that the Saudis have done to his cities, Mecca and Medina?"

The last question is very significant, as Moroccans, on many occasions, connected their longing to see the holy places because of their relation to the Prophet. The following passage is from a conversation I had with Yasir, the fabric shop owner from Fes whom I introduced in Chapter Two:

> When I was in Mecca, I wanted to see the places where the Prophet once lived and to remember what he did… My father told me many stories about visiting places like saqift Banī Saʿida,[191] the place of the battle of the Trench,[192] the house of Khadija,[193] and many other. These places were significant in the history of Islam… All of those places are now gone!

It is estimated that the construction projects have resulted in 95 percent of original historic buildings in Mecca being torn down (Johnson 2014; Nasrawi 2007).[194] Historical buildings that have been demolished over the last two decades include the house mentioned below of the Prophet Muhammad's first wife, Khadija, the historical mosque marking the aforementioned battle of the Trench, a mosque that was linked to the Prophet's grandson, and the Ajyad Fortress (Taylor 2011). At issue is whether these constructions and changes have meant that the Hajj experience has lost its true spiritual meaning for some pilgrims and the

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[191] *Saqifat* Banī Sāʿida was a roofed building in Medina used by the Banū Saʿida clan and was significant as the site where, after the prophet Muhammad's death, some of his Companions gathered and pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr, electing him as the first Caliph (cf. Lecomte 2012).

[192] The battle of the Trench (or *Ghazwat al-Khandaq*) was a site where a 30-day-long siege of Medina by the Meccans who lost the battle.

[193] Khadija (or Khadija bint Khuwaylid) was the first wife and first female follower of the prophet Muhammad. She was a successful businesswoman in her own right and was referred to by Muslims as 'Mother of the Believers'. Khadija and her daughter Fatima are two of the most important female figures in Islam (cf. Ali 2014).

[194] As it has already been mentioned, the destruction of the sites around Mecca is not limited to modern times. Several battles took place around Mecca throughout history including the destruction of the shrine built over the tomb of Fatima, the daughter of prophet Muhammad and tombs of many of his Companions in the 19th century (cf. Al-Alawi 2006).

destruction has reduced the heritage of the prophet Muhammad. The modern Hajj pilgrim may see Mecca as a commercial city with its skyline dominated by high-rise buildings that impose themselves dominantly over the House of God, the Kaʿba (Ibid), symbolizing the replacement of a religious set of values with a more materialistic one.[195]

Pilgrims' accounts reflect concerns about the transformation of both Mecca and Medina (cf. Al-Alawi 2006). Here's how *al-ḥājj* Salah put it:

> The house of Khadija, the wife of the Prophet, was transformed into a public toilet facility… The house of the Companion of the Prophet Abu Bakr – which I visited in the past – was replaced with a hotel… The sites of the main battles in Islamic history, Uhud, and Badr, which were led by Prophet Muhammad, have been paved for a parking lot for cars and buses…

The destruction of these sites was much criticized by Moroccan pilgrims who find it disrespectful to the legacy of the Prophet. Being Sunni Muslims and highly influenced by Sufi doctrines, Moroccans honor the Prophet and express love for him and his household. For example, the *mawlid* or birthday of the Prophet is an occasion of celebration all around Morocco.[196] In Morocco great respect is paid to figures related to the prophet Muhmmad such as Moulay Idriss I, who is believed to be the great grandson of the Prophet. This shrine of Idriss I in Zerhoun, together with the tomb of Moulay Idriss II in Fes are seen as primary local pilgrimage sites in Morocco (Wyrtzen 2015, 38-61). Other Moroccans related by a bloodline to the Prophet, known in Morocco as the *Shurfa*, are also highly respected as well as the monarch who claims descent from

[195] The argument about materialistic pleasures itself can sometimes be framed in religious terms such as *hadha min faḍli rabbi* (This is by the Grace of God) to convey not only gratitude to God but also as a justification for materialistic pleasures. I heard this argument from some Moroccans who can afford to visit Mecca for either Hajj or *ʿumra* every year. Also see Chapter Two.

[196] *Mawlid* often refers to the observance of the birthday of the prophet Muhammad which is commemorated in the third month in the Islamic calendar. It can also refer to annual saint festivals in several Muslim countries during which saints are celebrated (cf. Schielke 2006). Also see Chapter Nine.

the prophet as shown in Chapter Five (Ouguir 2013; Rhani 2014). When I visited the shrine of Moulay Idriss I in Zerhoun with Nuha, she told me:

> Look how people here visit the shrine of Moulay Idriss… Imagine how much more important are the places where the Prophet himself –*ʿalayhi l-salām* – lived…[197] Oh how much I would have liked it to visit his house and the houses of his friends… The love of the Prophet is part of one's faith…

Given Moroccan devotion to such shrines in Morocco, it is not surprising that the destruction, in Saudi Arabia, of the places where the Prophet and his Companions had lived left many Moroccans not only personally disappointed, but also experiencing a deep sense of the contrast and even contradiction between the Saudi practices, including interpretations of Islam, and those lived and practiced in Morocco. *Al-ḥājj* Salah makes it clear that Moroccans love and honor the Prophet's household, his family and companions out of their love for the Prophet.

The places Moroccans like to visit in Mecca and Medina acquire spiritual status not only because of their connection to the prophet but also because they are seen as "signs of God," according to *al-ḥājj* Salah.[198] The signs – *al-ḥājj* Salah told me – may be places, events, personalities, catastrophes and many other things, but one thing which the holy Qurʾan makes clear is that the signs, *āyāt,* are meant to remind people of God, his bounties, his mercy, and his other attributes. Therefore, places, symbols, and historical personalities, which serve as reminders and symbols for humanity, and strengthen the submission to God, are to be respected, preserved – even cherished – and revered within the context of the faith.

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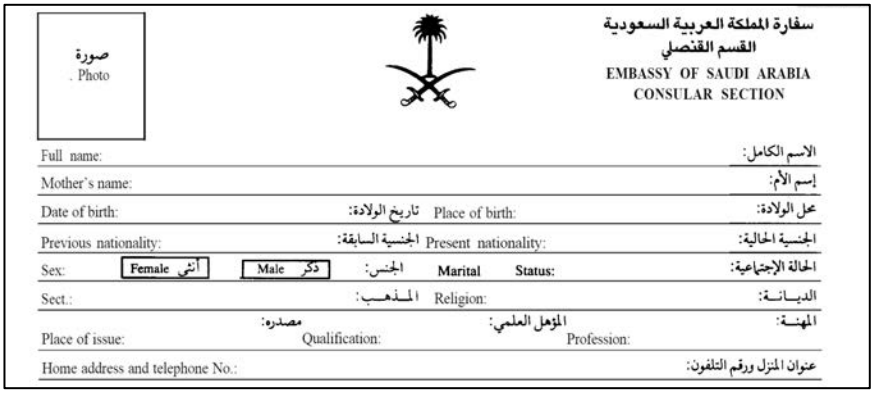
[197] *ʿAlayhi l-salām* (peace be upon him) is a conventionally complimentary phrase attached to the names of prophets in Islam and is often used following the mention of prophet Muhammad as a short variant of the phrase *ṣallā -Allāhu ʿalayhī wa-sallam* (God bless him and grant him peace) or alternatively the acronym PBUH.

[198] The reference to the signs of God can be traced to the Qurʾanic verse: "There truly are signs in the creation of the heavens and earth, and in the alternation of night and day, for those with understanding, who remember God standing, sitting, and lying down, who reflect on the creation of the heavens and earth: 'Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose– You are far above that!– so protect us from the torment of the Fire." (Qurʾan 3, 190-191).

The issue of the destruction of ancient sites, revered by many Muslims, seems to take on an additional dimension when pilgrims frame it within a wider discourse which questions the motives behind other management matters related to Hajj. For example, many Moroccans located the destruction within the broader issue of the Saudi fear of a Shiʿi influence in Mecca, possibly seeing it as an illustration of this fear. Moroccans also referred to the Wahhabi antipathy to Sufi practices such as veneration of saints and visitation of tombs.

I witnessed something of this fear when I was in Mecca, participating in the lesser pilgrimage. Between the *ʿaṣr* and *maghrib* prayers, I heard a scholar speaking to the men's gathering, his words relayed by loudspeaker to the women's section of the mosque. His lesson was focused on the Shiʿi branch of Islam and, he continued, that those who were Shiʿa were, in fact, not Muslim at all. Clearly, the Shiʿi - Sunni divide exists, but this stark exclusion of the Shiʿa from the faith was remarkable and may reflect contemporary geopolitics rather than a religious comment – Shiʿism being closely linked with Iran, which is viewed with hostility by Saudi Arabia.

In a conversation with *al-ḥājj* Salah, he mentioned several other controversial issues in relation to Saudi Arabia's management of the Hajj. For example, he questioned the reasons why the Hajj visa application asks for one's religion and sect. As for religion, it is known that Hajj visas would only be issued to Muslims. When it came to sect, *al-ḥājj* Salah thought it would be a way of monitoring Sunni and Shiʿi pilgrims. He was not happy about the boycott by Iran of the Hajj season in 2016 although he agreed with the Iranian position on the events of 2015 which will be mentioned later. Commenting on the absence of Iranians in the Hajj of 2016, one of my interlocutors quoted a female guard in Mecca claiming that the Hajj season of the year went smoothly due to the absence of Iranians.


سفارة المملكة العربية السعودية
القسم القنصلي
EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA
CONSULAR SECTION

صورة
Photo

Full name:	الاسم الكامل:
Mother's name:	إسم الأم:
Date of birth: تاريخ الولادة: Place of birth:	محل الولادة:
Previous nationality: الجنسية السابقة: Present nationality:	الجنسية الحالية:
Sex: Female أنثى Male ذكر الجنس: Marital Status:	الحالة الإجتماعية:
Sect.: المذهب: Religion:	الديانة:
Place of issue: مصدره: Qualification: المؤهل العلمي: Profession:	المهنة:
Home address and telephone No.:	عنوان المنزل ورقم التلفون:

Figure 39: Sample of Saudi visa application/
among the questions: religion and sect[199]

In addition to performing the demanded rituals of Hajj and *ʿumra*, most Moroccan pilgrims like to perform *ziyāra* (visits) to the places where the Prophet had lived. Significant places for *ziyāra* in Mecca and Medina are the graveyard and cemeteries where the Companions of the Prophet are buried. One such graveyard is that of Baqīʿal-Gharqad, known as Jannat al-Baqīʿ or simply al-Baqīʿ (Munt 2014,126). This is the cemetery where many of the most respected early figures of Islam are buried, including the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan, the imam of Medina Malik ibn Anas (hence the Maliki schools of law followed in Morocco), and the Prophet's infant son Ibrahim and grandson Hasan (Beránek and Ťupek 2018, 70-122). Historical records show that there were domes, cupolas, and mausoleums in Jannat al-Baqīʿ before the twentieth century; today it is a bare land without any buildings (see figures 40 and 41).[200] When Samira performed the Hajj, she wished to visit the al-Baqīʿ cemetery. However, her father, who accompanied her during Hajj, told her that only men were allowed to visit. In general, women are not allowed to visit graveyards in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter Eight).

[199] The Arabic term used is *madhhab*, law school. However, according to Moroccans, the question is used to single out Shi'a pilgrims.

[200] The splendor of the al-Baqīʿ cemetery in medieval times was documented, for example, by the accounts of Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta who described the cemetery with its elevated domes and shrines. Al-Baqīʿ was demolished in 1806 and, following reconstruction in the mid-nineteenth century, was destroyed again in 1925 (cf. Bayram 2014; Ende 2010).

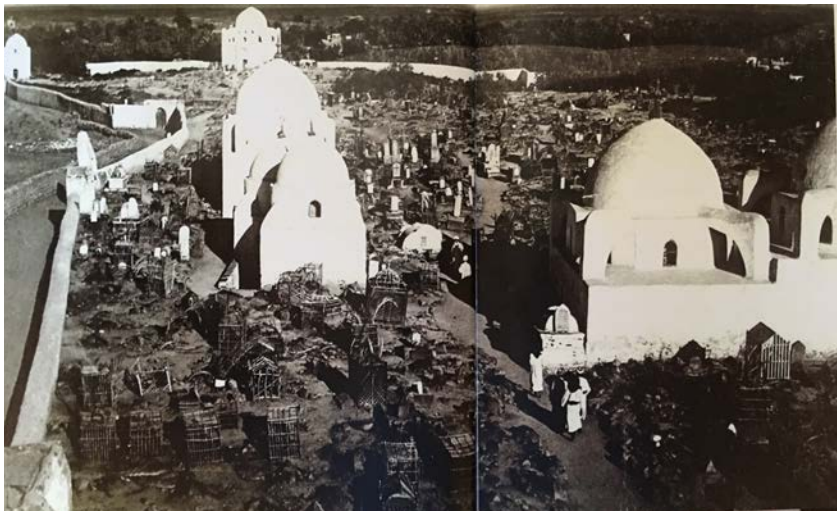


Figure 40: Picture of the Paradise Garden of al-Baqīʿ in 1907/1908 (Kioumgi and Graham 2009, 102-3)[201]

Figure 41: A current image of the Baqīʿ cemetery (Medina, 01/02/2018)

[201] Photographer: Muhammad ʿAli Effendi Saʿudi (Kioumgi and Graham 2009, 102-3).

Another significant cemetery which pilgrims often visit is that near the Mount Uḥud where a battle took place in the year 625 CE.[202] Many pilgrims visit the mountain and the cemetery as part of their *ziyāra* near Medina. According to *al-ḥājj* Salah:

> In 2013, the Saudi authorities used concrete to fill the crevice in Mount Uḥud where the prophet Muhammad went after the battle of Uḥud and put up a sign to warn visitors that this was a mountain like any other...

As seen in Figure 42, there are also signs placed near the graveyard of the Battle of Uḥud in Medina with instruction in different languages seeking to control how pilgrims should behave near the graveyard to which pilgrims are not allowed access.

Figure 42: Blue signs of behavior guidelines near Uḥud cemetery (Medina, 01/02/2018)

[202] The Battle of Uḥud was a battle between the early Muslims and Qurayshi Meccans in 625CE at the valley located near Mount Uḥud that lies about five kilometers north of Medina (cf. Robinson 2012).

The guidelines state in the English version of the sign that "the permissiveness of the visit to the graveyard is in accordance with the teachings of our beloved prophet Muhammad (PBUH)." A journey with the intention of visiting graves, however, is prohibited. It is forbidden to supplicate the dead and it is "equally forbidden to seek assistance, seek intercession and to make request from the deceased." Prayers for – or to –the dead, are considered sacrilegious, if they seem to link the deceased too closely with God. Wiping the walls, as well as picking stones from the graves, is prohibited, and climbing Mount Uḥud and picking stones and collecting sand from it for the purposes of seeking blessings are all prohibited. All these regulations are written on the signs near the graveyard.

A paradoxical yet interesting sight near Mount Uḥud, though, was that of an iconic open-top, double-decker tour bus, like any Hop On - Hop Off bus that can be found in any of the world's tourist attractions. Mount Uḥud is stop number 5 in the hotspots of Medina which also included al-Baqīʿ, the Mosque of the Prophet, and other attractions. The bus also makes stops at several shopping malls. Moroccan pilgrims often visit the mountains around Mecca and Medina and the places they can reach, even if advised not to go to those places. At the same time, some pilgrims commented on the ironic mix of aspects of the sacred (pilgrimage) with other, conflicting, purposes (such as commercial pursuits).

Martyn Egan (2013) calls the seemingly paradoxical elements of the Saudi society 'halal ignorance' applying Olivier Roy's paradigm of 'holy ignorance' (Roy 2010). According to Roy, holy ignorance removes the possibility of the profane (that is, a social and cultural domain independent of the religious), and rejects the possibility of the secular (Roy 2010, 28-29). In the Saudi context, according to Egan, this project of discoloration has resulted in a society in which practices and objects are classified almost exclusively according to the religious markers of halal and *ḥarām* and are thus reconstituted within a universe of religious practice, *ʿibādāt*. In that sense, a visit to a graveyard is *ḥarām* but the redevelopment of Mecca and destruction of historical sites is halal. To put it differently, halal ignorance can be applied to the selective use of

religious reasoning to permit, or prohibit, actions – but always with a 'religious' justification.

Figure 43: Hop-on-Hop-off bus stops (Medina, 01/02/2018)

Moroccans showed disagreement with what they sometimes identified as a Wahhabi and, on other occasions, labelled as a Salafi, view regarding the act of visiting graves (cf. Abou El Fadl 2001).[203] Moroccans

[203] The term 'Salafi' can be confusing because it is defined in a number of ways. Salafis in general are those who claim to follow the example of the early Muslim community (*salaf*) (Beranek and Tupek 2009, 2). When my Moroccan interlocutors referred to the Salafi thought of the Saudi government, they linked

expressed their interest in pious visitations in the vicinity of Mecca and Medina. In contrast to the Saudi regulations like at al-Baqīʿ in Medina, visiting graves, especially of saints and religious figures, is a popular practice in Morocco (cf. Eickelman 1976). Many of my interlocutors expressed their disappointment at the destruction of the graves and an even greater disappointment at the comprehensive refusal to admit women into the fully fenced graveyards in Medina.

According to Islamic tradition, clarified in a prophetic hadith, Muslims can only travel, *shadd al-rihḥāl,* for pilgrimage or *ziyāra* to three mosques: the Grand Mosque of Mecca, Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Although Moroccans recognize the importance of these three sites, many other sites continue to be significant. Morocco itself is home to hundreds of sacred sites and pilgrimage places such as tombs, caves, cult locations, and even trees that are scattered throughout its deserts, coastlines and mountains. Some of these sites are part of the indigenous Amazigh culture and others are related to Jewish, Christian as well as Islamic heritages (Amster 2013). Many such sites continue to be popular places for Moroccans to visit. Both men and women visit these local tombs and graveyards. For example, on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, the custom goes that women and men go to cemeteries to visit their deceased relatives.[204] According to *al-ḥājj* Salah:

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it with rejection of many religious and traditional actions such as the visitation of graves and saint shrines. For more on Salafi views on *ziyāra* see Beranek, and Tupek (2009). Wahhabi theology the foundations of which were put in place in the eighteenth-century by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab use a strict literalism in the interpretation of religious texts and exhibited extreme hostility to mysticism and any sectarian divisions within Islam (cf. Abou El Fadl 2001).

[204] ʿĀshūrāʾ is the tenth day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar. The day was originally marked, according to hadith, when the Prophet came to Medina and found the Jews observing the fast on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ. They (the Jews) were asked about it and they said that it was the day on which God granted victory to Moses and (his people) over the Pharaoh and that they (the Jews) observed the fast out of gratitude to God. Upon hearing this, the prophet commanded his followers to also observe fast on this day (cf. Muslim, book 6, hadith 2514-2520). The day continues to be a recommended but non-obligatory day of fasting for Sunni Muslims and occasion for celebration. For Shi'a Muslims, it is a time of mourning as the same date happens to be the date of the in the Battle of Karbala (680 CE), when Husayn, the grandson of Muhammad and the

> It seems too easy for the Saudis to call anything *bidʿa* [illicit innovation] or even *ḥarām*… But in Morocco people visit graves; both men and women do… The Prophet himself visited the graves of the martyrs and people wish to follow the example of the Prophet…

The Moroccan pilgrims I spoke to expressed deep interest in following the example of the Prophet in their *ziyāra* practices in Mecca and Medina (cf. Munt 2014, 123-147).[205] Some of them explicitly compared the regulations they found when visiting Saudi Arabia for Hajj or *ʿumra*, to the religious style in Morocco, stating that they find that in Morocco there is a middle path to Islam that is essentially different from that adopted in Saudi Arabia. They object to the religious reasons that are used to justify the destruction of graves and shrines and to restrict access to sites linked to historically significant religious figures.[206] Therefore, it is fair to say that Moroccan pilgrims are dissatisfied with the Saudi religious interpretation and consequent regulation of *ziyāra*. The contrast between the Moroccan interpretation of Islamic practice vis a vis graves and other venerated sites, is sharply at variance with Saudi views. The Saudis impose their religious interpretations on the practice of *ziyāra* by virtue of their control of the geographical locations. However, the spiritual domain defies such control and consequently some pilgrims experience deeply conflicting sensations when they are pressed to accommodate their spiritual inclinations within a Saudi framework.

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son of Ali (cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and the First Shiʿa imam) was killed (cf. Black et al. 2018).

[205] The practice of *ziyāra* or visitation of graves itself has a varied history in Islamic tradition, beginning with traditions attributed to the prophet Muhammad, who denied himself a visit to graves but later allowed it (cf. Beranek and Tupek 2009).

[206] Members of the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Iftā', a Saudi religious governmental body, have issued many fatwas relating to the presence of graves or shrines in, or under, mosques. I read some of these fatwas in a booklet which one of my interlocutors received in Mecca. The fatwa in the booklet claimed that destroying the sites and removing the graves, as well as restricting access to sites linked to religious figures, will prevent idolatry and help Muslims to concentrate on their faith.

While many of the Moroccans with whom I talked expressed their dissatisfaction with the destruction of graves and other historical sites and voiced their dissatisfaction with the policing of their experience in Mecca and Medina, the main fear of many Moroccans during the pilgrimage revolved around the kind of accidents that have occurred in Mecca, especially at the times of the pilgrimage. In the next section, I discuss the stampede that took place during my fieldwork in Morocco in 2015.

Preserving the safety of pilgrims between stampedes and disasters

The following anecdote describes the time of receiving the news of the Minā stampede which took place in September 2015. It was the first day of *ʿīd l-kbīr,* which I spent with the family of a relative of my respondents in Fes. *Al-ḥājj* Salim, my host, was sitting with his wife and daughters watching the national Moroccan TV as it showed live footage of the prayer of *ʿīd* performed by Moroccans, and accompanied by the King of Morocco, in one of the mosques of Rabat. A few minutes later, breaking news sketchily reported an accident near Mecca. Around half an hour later it was reported that several hundred people were feared to have passed away in what we learned was a stampede. Immediately, *al-ḥājj* Salim made phone calls inquiring about a friend who was performing Hajj. When the friend did not answer, *al-ḥājj* Salim called the friend's son, who confirmed that his father was safe. *Al-ḥājj* Salim spent the afternoon inquiring about other people he knew in Mecca.

Al-ḥājj Salim followed the reports on the numbers of victims on Saudi and Moroccan TV channels as well as online. He reported that the number of victims continued to rise; first 105, then 364, and 717 by the afternoon. By the evening, five Moroccans were reported among the dead including the imam of Morocco's biggest mosque, the Hassan II mosque in Casablanca. Eight Moroccans were reported injured and dozens were reported missing (15 male and 19 female pilgrims according to *al-ḥājj* Salim).

No details were released about an investigation into the cause of the tragedy. Moroccans that I met in the days following the tragedy would say: "The poor people went to perform Hajj and lost their lives;" others said: "Lucky them! They died after the Day of Arafat which means their Hajj is complete," "They died totally cleansed from sins," or "It's the mistake of bad management and arrogant government" and "May God take revenge [on the Saudi authorities!]" For many weeks after the tragedy, Moroccans everywhere I went talked about the stampede and discussed in detail how it happened, the possible reasons, and the number of pilgrims who died. The final reports stated that the number of victims reached more than 2,400 pilgrims according to a report by *The New York Times* (Gladstone 10/12/2015).[207] The numbers included 41 Moroccans among the dead.[208]

The stampede in Minā was the second incident to happen in the Hajj season of 2015. A few months earlier, a crane had collapsed leaving more than 100 dead and over 200 injured.[209] When the Minā stampede took place, many Moroccans referred back to the earlier accident suggesting that Saudi authorities were negligent for having a series of cranes overlooking the Grand Mosque in the first place.

These accidents were not the first in the modern history of the Hajj. In 1990, for example, a crush in a tunnel in Minā killed 1,426 pilgrims. Further crushes occurred in 1994, 1998, 2001 and 2004 (Bianchi 2004, 11). In addition, over 400 died in 1987 when Saudi security forces attacked – mainly Iranian – pilgrims in Mecca, who were protesting peacefully against the USA and Israel (Kramer 1990, 190).[210]

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[207] For the full report see https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/11/world/middleeast/death-toll-from-hajj-stampede.html

[208] Information provided by a local official via personal connection.

[209] See https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34226003

[210] In July 1987, the Civil Defense forces and Saudi police opened fire against Iranian demonstrators after arguments escalated to fights between the two parties. It has been reported that 402 people were killed during the insident and 649 were wounded. This led to political tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia and Iranian pilgrims were kept from entering Saudi Arabia for Hajj seasons 1988 and 1989 (cf. Kramer 1990).

Table 4: Previous accidents during Hajj

Year	# dead	Explanation
2006	76	Collapse of hotel in Mecca
2006	364	Minā stampede
2004	250	Minā stampede
2003	14	Minā stampede
2001	35	Minā stampede
1998	118	Minā stampede
1997	343	Fire in the tents near Minā
1994	270	Minā stampede
1990	1426	Minā stampede
1975	200	Fire in the tents near Minā

These accidents were a major topic of discussion for a range of reasons. First of all, there is the subject of dying in Mecca. Many people spoke of the virtue of dying and being buried in Mecca. One taxi driver in Casablanca kept saying: "*saʿdathum*!" an expression of envy of those who had died in Mecca. Like the taxi driver, many people considered dying in Mecca a highly regarded honor that many – mostly old and weak pilgrims – ardently desire. Following the 2015 stampede, *al-ḥājj* Salim stated that those who died during the stampede might have a higher reward being in their *iḥrām* while performing Hajj:

> Those who died in the stampede died in the very next day following the standing in Arafat… Hajj *is* Arafat, so their pilgrimage, if complete, means that they were cleansed of all their sins before dying… They will be resurrected [on the Day of Judgement] in the state of *iḥrām* and they died without sins… Lucky them!

Although many Moroccans expressed envy for those who passed away in the stampede, they nevertheless showed dissatisfaction with the Hajj mismanagement that might have been a factor in the stampede and previous accidents in Mecca. During the first week of October – following the stampede – Moroccan activists – on social media – called for a lawsuit to be filed against Saudi Arabia. A report in the Moroccan daily Arabic newspaper *al-Masāʾ* claimed that Saudi Arabia was responsible for the mismanagement of the Hajj rite of *rajm*, the symbolic stoning of Satan,

which had caused the stampede in Minā. The daily newspaper reported Moroccan families' claims that Saudi authorities did not take the necessary security measures. Earlier in the same week, Moroccan pilgrims and activists organized a sit-in outside the Moroccan parliament located on Avenue Mohammed V in Rabat to denounce what they called the mismanagement and lawlessness that marked the 2015 Hajj.

The protest started peacefully but the situation soon turned grim. A video shared on Facebook showed three police officers aggressively seizing a banner held by one of the protesters. In the footage, riot police were violently pushing protesters, forcing them to finish their sit-in. One female protester shouted as she was being forced to leave the square: "This is shame… This is shame… Our country fears the petrodollar." Officially, the Moroccan government did not openly criticize Saudi authorities for the way they handled the aftermath of the crush. News reports, however, stated that the king Mohammed VI had instructed a delegation composed of representatives of the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Health and Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs to visit the hospitals and the morgue in Mecca and to follow up the identification of the Moroccan victims and where they came from. It proved impossible to find updates regarding the lawsuit against Saudi Arabia. Many Moroccans sensed a cover-up, citing the fact that their government did not endorse and support the suit. Eventually, those who died were buried in Mecca and the injured were returned to Morocco at a later date.

In response to the Minā stampede and other accidents that took place during the Hajj season, many Moroccans called for measures against Saudi Arabia. Indeed, measures were taken by the Iranian government which, due to the Stampede of 2015, decided to boycott the Hajj season of 2016. In news reports, Iran announced that its citizens would not travel to Mecca, accusing Saudi Arabia of failing to guarantee their safety (Al-Tumi 17/05/2016).[211] Moroccan newspapers reported the Iranian boycott, but opinion was divided between those who

[211] See https://www.hespress.com/international/306464.html

supported the move and others who agreed with the response of the Moroccan government which supported the Saudi claim against what they called "the politicization of the pilgrimage" (Binhda 08/08/2016).[212] Many Moroccans, however, said that it was already 'political' as Saudi Arabia discriminated against the pilgrims of Iran.[213]

This recent dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran, however, is not new. For example, in 1987, Iranian Shiʿa rioted in Mecca in protest at Saudi impositions on Hajj rites and 400 were killed (Samman 2007, 140). Dissatisfaction with the Saudi government does not only come from outside of the Kingdom. Internally, there are voices that disagree with the management of the Hajj. For example, in 1994, the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), a Saudi dissident group opposed the Saudi government as un-Islamic and produced a report on the regime's management of the Hajj (Champion 2003, 212).[214] The report referred to the Saudi lack of professionalism, favoritism and interference in the management of the Hajj. Thus, catastrophic accidents, such as stampedes, are a catalyst for a broader discussion of the Saudi management of the holy sites, both outside the kingdom and even within it.

Essentially, for millions of people, and Moroccans included, Mecca represents a place where pilgrims, regardless of their nationality, gather, emphasizing the universal and inclusive nature of Islam. Consequently, most Moroccans I spoke to attempt to untangle the religious aspect of pilgrimage, separating it from those aspects superimposed by the Saudi government; for them, these Saudi additions and controls are not representative of Islam. According to *al-ḥājj* Salah:

> We are obliged to love God and His Prophet… We love the holy sites of Mecca and Medina.. But we are not obliged to like the house of the Saud! They do not represent Islam and the

[212] See (in Arabic) https://www.hespress.com/orbites/320337.html
[213] For more information of the Saudi-Iranian relations see Ekhtiari, Samsu, and Gholipour (2011).
[214] The Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights was found in 1993 as the first opposition organization in the Kingdom openly challenging the monarchy (Hearn 1998).

> holy places do not belong to them; these places belong to all Muslims…

Following the Minā stampede, many people rejected the current Saudi-inspired presentation of the holy places and their management, calling for root-and-branch reform. I shall consider these suggested reforms in due course, but first wish to establish how Moroccan pilgrims express an unwavering sense of loss related to a better past, mourning their previous spiritual experiences of the holy sites. Their grief is articulated through a comparison of those remembered past pilgrimages juxtaposed with current experiences of the holy places.

Longing for the past and looking at the future

The following conversation took place at the women's gathering mentioned earlier where Samira complained that she could not visit the tomb of the Prophet in his mosque in Medina:

> **Muna:** I could not see the tomb of the Prophet either… I don't like the way Hajj is managed by the Saudis.
>
> **Samira:** *They* go and rent hotels in France for millions; start wars with their neighbors and waste the money of Hajj! They tell us this is halal and this is *ḥarām* only according to their interests!
>
> **Salma:** This money should be given to the people of countries like the poor Syrians, the Palestinians… Real religion is not to harm others and to leave them to perform their rituals.
>
> **Nuha:** I remember in the past when I went on Hajj, rituals were easier even though facilities were not available… We were able to visit different sites where the Prophet and his Companions lived…
>
> **Samira:** Now everything is prohibited, *ḥarām*, they say! They try to control the way women dress, the places we visit and prohibit us from visiting the grave of the Prophet… I wish I witnessed how these places were in the past!
>
> **Muna:** It is not only the issue of halal or *ḥarām*; what do Saudis do with the money of the pilgrim? The war on Yemen?
>
> **Samira:** If the Saudis really followed the Qurʾan and the teachings of the Prophet, they would not destroy the holy

> places and they would use the money of pilgrims more wisely.

An appeal to a 'glorious past' of the pilgrimage is a prominent feature of the discussions of pilgrimage, especially among the older generation. These nostalgic discourses are heavily mediated and contextualized by the dissatisfaction with the current management of the Hajj. Nuha, for example, spoke to the women about her longing for the simplicity of the Hajj in the past compared to the complications of the Hajj process today. When she performed the Hajj in the 1970s, she did not yet need to register for the lottery *qurʿa* process which Moroccans have to follow if they wish to apply for Hajj today.

In their discussion, the women emphasized the belief that the Saudi authorities that manage the Hajj and *ʿumra* have deviated from the right path, *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*. The women spoke about the control practiced by the Saudi authorities, particularly in relation to women. For example, at the Grand Mosque of Mecca, female pilgrims were handed leaflets by female guards directing them to the proper dress code for Muslim women (Figure 44). These leaflets were also on display in several languages. Furthermore, the women were unable to visit the grave of the Prophet at the Rawḍa in Medina (see Chapter Three).

The experiences of several Moroccan women in Mecca and Medina left them disappointed. They often compared their experiences with those of earlier generations, when women were able to see the tomb of the Prophet, visit cemeteries, and travel to historical sites around Mecca and Medina. Following the 1979 siege of the Grand Mosque of Mecca, the Saudi government enacted a series of much more conservative ideas especially on women (Doumato 2009, 24; Trofimov 2007).[215] What women experience during the Hajj, therefore, can be seen

[215] The 1979 siege of the Grand Mosque of Mecca was led by Juhayman ibn Muhammad al-Otaibi during the season of Hajj, in protest to what he and his followers described as the "religious and moral laxity and degeneration" of Saudi rulers (Al-Rasheed 2002, 144). The dissenters claimed that the Saud family had abandoned Islamic principles, followed the lead of Western countries, and needed to be overthrown for true Islamic reform. The rebellion aimed to bring Arabia back to (Wahhabi) Islam. After the rebellion was violently crushed, the Saud family responded by making religion central to the state in order to quell

within a larger framework of 'segregation policy' directed at females (cf. van Geel 2018, 77; Meijer 2010).

Figure 44: Fliers distributed in the Grand Mosque of Mecca about women's dress code (Mecca, 07/02/2018)

For many pilgrims, the past, viewed through personal recollections or collective memories, seems to present an ideal for which Moroccans long, contrasting it with the present state of the Hajj. The

any further dissent (cf. Trofimov 2007). As a political protest couched in religious terms, the siege prompted the government to enforce much more conservative agenda (Doumato 2009, 24; Trofimov 2007).

recollected past, as portrayed by many pilgrims, is, in their opinion, accurately represented; however, memory can be distorted by dissatisfaction with current reality and a rosy glow imposed on a flawed history. The pilgrimage has always been a mixture of religious and profane aspects. For example, there has always been a commercial component in the pilgrimage as a venue for trading: pilgrims travelling in caravans often traded along the way in order to finance their journey (Pearson 1994). Yet, for contemporary Moroccan pilgrims, Saudi regulations and the destruction of holy sites are predominantly discussed in terms of the speed of change and the massive gap between the privileged and the rest that this change creates.

In addition to their nostalgia for the past, Moroccans express fear for the future. Today my respondents are debating ways of action and alternatives for the current situation in Mecca. Solutions were often discussed among Moroccans, including further internationalizing the current Hajj regime and even boycotting the Hajj and *ʿumra* until the Saudi government respects the needs and demands of the full span of Muslim pilgrims. Internationalizing the Hajj policy seemed like a logical demand for pilgrims. *Al-ḥājj* Salah, for example, believed that Hajj is for all Muslims. Therefore, it makes sense that Muslim countries participate in its management. Muslim states, according to *al-ḥājj* Salah, could run the Hajj collaboratively through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). If that were to happen, Saudi Arabia's sovereign territorial rights would be conditional rather than absolute. There would be more respect for the right of all Muslims to visit the holy cities and preserve their history.

Many Moroccans even discussed the possibility of a boycott of the Saudi government or even of the Hajj itself until the Saudi government listened to the concerns of Muslim pilgrims. The call for boycott had a financial aspect for many Moroccans. Many of them questioned the destination and use of the millions of dirhams they pay for Hajj and *ʿumra*. Most of the money, many Moroccans feared, does not go to the holy places but is spent on "holidays in Western countries," according to Nuha or "financing the war of Yemen" as Latifa mentioned. For many Moroccans,

it made more sense to spend the financial benefits of the Hajj on poorer Muslim nations rather than on expansion projects, five-star hotels, and disputes with fellow Muslim countries. Thus, we see a sense of material and political dissatisfaction with Saudi Arabia which emerges through the religious experience of Hajj.

Conclusion

During my fieldwork in Morocco, Moroccan pilgrims often reflected on their pilgrimage experience in relation to some seemingly paradoxical elements of the Saudi handling of the Hajj. Despite the protests against and disapproval of the demolition of sacred sites, the Saudi authorities have carried on with expansions, destruction of historical sites, and controversial treatment of pilgrims, especially of Shiʿi Muslims and women. In the eyes of many Moroccans, much of the history of Islam in Mecca and Medina has been undermined by the Saudi mismanagement of the Hajj. At the same time, however, the pilgrimage to Mecca remains an important aspect of the lives of many Moroccans and so do the religious sites in Mecca and Medina.

The socio-economic profile of the people I encountered during my fieldwork may have had an impact on their responses to the pilgrimage experiences, even though they spoke of the pilgrimage in largely spiritual religious terms. They were mainly middle or lower-middle class and most of them had some education. As such, finances are a constraint for the vast majority of those people. Their religious beliefs and their reading of the Qur'an emphasize the universal nature of the religion – a religion for all people, equal before God. The inordinate wealth of the Saudi Kingdom as a geopolitical entity shapes the material experience of the Hajj, sharpening the economic burden of being a pilgrim. Many of my interlocutors experienced a sense of alienation, ironically in relation to the most holy sites of their religion, the cradle of Islam. These are the very sites where they expect to find the greatest peace, greatest reassurance and spiritual consolation. Their feelings of displacement in relation to their spiritual home is felt by many to be a direct result of the Saudi

modernization project, in particular the vast array of new buildings and the erasure of ancient ones.

During my fieldwork, many Moroccans expressed resentment towards the new hotel complexes, especially those in close proximity to the Grand Mosque of Mecca. The reason given was that they provide *the rich* with easy access and a perfect vantage point to the heart of their faith, the Kaʿba. Many Moroccans made a point about wealthy pilgrims, whose rooms looked directly into the Kaʿba, looming large, whilst 'ordinary' pilgrims sat at the fringe, excluded: this social division is strikingly encapsulated in the photograph included earlier, which showed an advert for a lavish hotel room, with privileged view over the Kaʿba juxtaposed with poorer women sitting at the curb's edge (page 231). This picture may exaggerate the effect, but it does resonate with the feelings of many respondents that they were marginalized during Hajj.

The drive to create new buildings seemed to many interlocutors to be at the expense of the pilgrims' comfort and even safety. Discussions of accidents that have occurred over time are currently imbued with a critique of the way money is spent by Saudi Arabia. For Moroccan pilgrims, the Wahhabi interpretations of Islam seem to dominate the pilgrimage sites and exclude the possibility of diverse readings of the Qur'an. For instance, divergent traditions regarding the veneration of graves placed Moroccan pilgrims at odds with the dominant Saudi reading of the Islamic tradition. As a result, many pilgrims have developed a deep sense of nostalgia for the way pilgrimages were conducted in the past. These feelings of loss are common and discussed freely, thus increasing the likelihood of the emergence of a socially constructed collective memory.

One's individual memory is capable of morphing dramatically and diverging from the experience it embodies or recreates; amongst others, these memories are shaped by an over-arching common narrative. Regarding the memories about Hajj of present-day Moroccans, a generally shared narrative is quite critical of the current management of the Hajj. Thus, it is possible that a history of the Hajj is being constructed in collective Moroccan memory, prompted by dissatisfaction with the

Saudi policies surrounding the Hajj and also influenced by a skepticism of Saudi geopolitics. Of course, this is not to imply that the emerging narrative about the past is invalid; besides shaping expectations and therefore observations, the experiences they represent are real for those who recollect them. In relation to the generally shared desire to experience sacredness and proximity to transcendental presence by 'walking in the footsteps' of the prophet Muhammed, both in their longings for the imagined Meccan past, and their disappointment in today's modernization projects, today's pilgrims are likely to accentuate the differences between the two.

Within the Hajj experience of Moroccans, the political strands seemed to be so tightly woven into the religious experience as to be inseparable, as was frequently illustrated in the comments quoted earlier. My interlocutors spoke about their faith as having a strongly social dimension – voiced through the sense of equality and inclusivity – which is at variance with the geopolitics of the Saudi Arabian regime.

The inequality issue is ever more present as a social factor as many pilgrims are excluded from activities of all kinds for financial reasons and at other times because of their gender. The next chapter focuses on the experiences specifically of Moroccan women with the Hajj.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Intersecting Power Structures in Moroccan Women's Narratives of the Hajj

A happy woman was one who could exercise all kinds of rights, from the right to move to the right to create, compete, and challenge, and at the same time could be loved for doing so.
(Fatima Mernissi)[216]

Introduction

I joined Najat to visit her parents in their house in Temara, a small coastal city to the south of Rabat, where we would spend the weekend. In a small living room, Najat, her father and I sat on two mattresses facing a flat-screen TV and talking about the father's job as a mosque imam. Soon, Najat's mother entered the room carrying a brown clay dish. Najat brought to the middle a small round table on which the mother placed the dish and said: "here is your share of the seven vegetables *siksū*."[217] The couscous dish in front of us was composed of semolina grains, granules of durum wheat, topped with cabbage, potato, turnip, carrots, courgette, pumpkin, and chickpeas and two pieces of meat. Najat commented that her mother prepares couscous lunch every Friday, a tradition that is kept by many families in Morocco.

Whilst enjoying the home-made food, Najat's mother left the room to return shortly with a pot of mint tea and some glasses. She sat next to us and made space for her mother-in-law who joined us shortly after. Najat introduced me to her grandmother, Ḥanna,[218] as she referred

[216] Fatima Mernissi was a Moroccan feminist writer and sociologist whose work largely addressed gender and religion. The passage at the beginning of this chapter was quoted from Mernissi's *Dreams Of Trespass: Tales Of A Harem Girlhood* (1994).
[217] Couscous is sometimes referred to as *siksu* or *sikuk* in Morocco.
[218] Ḥanna, is a word used locally to address a grandmother as a sign of respect. The word is derived from the Arabic word *ḥanan* meaning compassion and

to the older woman. Ḥanna was 82-years-old when I met her and had lived with her son and his family since the death of her husband three years earlier.

Ḥanna went on Hajj seven years previously together with her son who went as a religious guide with the pilgrims of his area. She remembered her pilgrimage especially in relation to the stories she heard when she was younger and living in the village. She told me that when she was little she knew only three people from the whole village who were lucky enough to travel to Mecca, one of whom was the *faqīh* of the mosque, the one who taught Qurʾan to the children of the village.[219] She also told me the story of her husband who, as a young man, attempted to walk to Mecca. He, however, was cheated by another man in Tunisia where he stopped to work in order to finance his journey. Having lost all his savings, the husband returned to Morocco without being able to go to Mecca.

As we were speaking, Ḥanna started to sing:

The *ḥājja* is leaving with the pilgrims
She is wearing her Mellali *ḥāyik*;[220]
How lucky you are, al-*ḥājja*!
Going to Hajj whilst young, *shābba*;
She tells you: 'Look after the girls!'
She tells you: 'Look after the lands!'
I am praying to God, my Master…
The ship is leaving;
Each has an intention;
My grave and night are coming…[221]

Figure 45: Painting of women wearing the *ḥāyik* (found in a small shop, Tangier, 05/08/2018)

kindness. Although names are not transliterated throughout this thesis, I chose to transliterate the word here for pronunciation proposes.

[219] *Faqīh* normally refers to an Islamic jurist, an expert in *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence. In Morocco it is often used to refer to a person with knowledge in the Qurʾan including an imam of a mosque (cf. Elckeman 1976).

[220] *Ḥāyik* is a traditional white outdoor cloak, made of silk and wool and is often worn by women in more cold areas of Morocco. It covers the whole body except the face and hands. This large piece of garment is a symbol of modesty and discretion. Mellali means that it was made in Beni Mellal, a city located in the center of Morocco. For more information of Moroccan women's dress see Boulanouar (2010).

[221] Fieldnotes, 23/09/2016.

The lyrics of Ḥanna's song refer to different aspects of the Hajj including its history, its social and symbolic significance, and gendered aspects of the journey. The song starts with a declaration that a female pilgrim, *ḥājja,* is leaving with other pilgrims for Mecca. In the past, Moroccan women leaving for Hajj used to wear a *ḥāyik*, a white cloak that covered their entire body, head and part of their face. In the song, being able to go on Hajj is a subject of envy. This is linked to the fact that it was rare for women to perform the pilgrimage in Morocco during the time the lyrics were composed. Therefore, women were, indeed, envious of female pilgrims who were able to make the journey to Mecca. It was a social expectation that one would express a desire to go on Hajj, pronouncing their longing for it and their wish to join those leaving for Mecca.

The song then addresses other aspects of Hajj in Morocco such as the importance of saying farewell to those who stay behind, begging family members and friends for forgiveness and asking them to look after the girls and lands.[222] This farewell is linked to the next lines of the song which function as a reminder of death and the grave. Mentioning death has a religious significance as a prompt for Muslims who are capable of performing the Hajj to do so.

The song continues by glorifying God for allowing pilgrims, both male and female, to perform Hajj. According to Ḥanna, who learned it from her mother, this song has been transmitted orally from generation to generation for a long time. It is uncertain how old the song is, but it does allude to the means of transportation at the time when Ḥanna learned the lyrics: ships. Up to the 1940s, while some caravans of Moroccan pilgrims travelled over land to Saudi Arabia, others went by steamship, the invention of which gave an enormous boost to the pilgrimage to Mecca from the 1850s (cf. Slight 2014, 55).[223]

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[222] There is no clear reason why the song specifies girls to be looked after as probably all children need care, but it might be related to the fact that the girls – like women – need to have a guardian looking after them and this makes it more urgent.

[223] Resources that I came across during my fieldwork include a short video from 1949 documenting the pilgrimage to Mecca from Morocco. The film states that 450 pilgrims were chosen among 2,500 from Morocco to sail towards Jeddah,

Ḥanna's song, then, represents a creative account of various social, religious and emotional dimensions of the Hajj. Taking it as a starting point, in this chapter I explore the meanings of Hajj for Moroccan women both on a personal and on a social level. I argue that the significance of the pilgrimage as a mark of success on the social, spiritual and financial levels differs when viewed across different categories of Moroccan women. Through Hajj, Moroccan women negotiate different forms of capital including social, cultural, spiritual and religious capital which are also informed by their *habitus* and everyday practices.[224]

My starting point in this analysis is Elizabeth Tonkin's argument that, in various ways, narrators are formed by their own narratives (Tonkin 1992, 50). Looking at the socio-cultural implications of women's growing access to cultural, social and symbolic capital related to Hajj, my argument builds on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and capital as tools to explain and analyze women's narratives and the ways in which these stories are embedded in women's daily lives (cf. Bourdieu 1986).[225] Bourdieu (1990) explores how, in different social fields, possessing various types of assets can confer power and profit to their holder (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, 119).[226] Depending on the field in which it functions, according to Bourdieu, capital (or power) can present itself in economic, cultural, or social forms. Building on these forms of capital, several anthropologists have argued for the existence and recognition of other forms of capital including symbolic capital, moral capital, and audible capital, among others (cf. Cooper 1999). Studying the oral

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from where they would continue to Mecca (see page 23-24 of this thesis). Hajj flights did not commence until 1957 (Guttery 1998).

[224] *Habitus* is defined (by Bourdieu) as the experience and possession of a tradition by an agent (Bourdieu 1985, 13).

[225] Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital is connected with his theoretical ideas on class. He identifies three dimensions of capital, each with its own relationship to class: economic, cultural and social capital (cf. Bourdieu 1986).

[226] The field, in the conceptualization of Bourdieu, is a competitive arena of social relations where agents or institutions deploy immense physical, mental, symbolic, and strategic resources in the production, acquisition and control of forms of capital (cf. Bourdieu 1991).

narratives of Moroccan women thus provides insights into the ways they negotiate different sets of power relations in everyday life.

Moreover, I shall highlight how the mobility of Moroccan women is an aspect of their social diversity which is influenced by geographical origin, class, education, financial means, and marital status. I will demonstrate that these variables have a direct impact on women's desires to go to Mecca, their ability to actually perform the Hajj and the experiences of those who have been on pilgrimage, examining the phases before, during and after they have concluded the pilgrimage.

Moroccan women's participation in Hajj

In general, not much information from past times is available on women's participation in Hajj journeys from Morocco to Mecca. This lack of knowledge might be related to the idea that men were seen as the transmitters of tradition in the public sphere whilst women were seen to be connected to the private (cf. Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006; Sadiqi 2003). It might have also been related to the limited access of women to education which meant that the vast majority of women had no access to writing their accounts. As a result, women had most likely passed on those accounts that have reached us through oral means such as Ḥanna's song. In addition to singing her song, Ḥanna gave the following account, one that gives us an impression of the mobility of people in the rural area where she lived, and the issues faced by women in particular:

> When I was young, our world – as girls – was our village; we did not think that anything existed beyond the village; we would not know how to go anywhere outside of the village. Hajj was more difficult and one needed to have money to be able to go to Mecca. I can remember that in our village, one would find one person in the whole area who had enough money to go on the Hajj: a man!

Although the requirement of pilgrimage to Mecca is an obligatory ritual for Muslim women and men alike, women may be excused from the obligation for reasons such as the lack of the appropriate male

companion for the journey (Tolmacheva 2013; Hendrickson 2016).[227] In the past, both in rural and in urban areas, Moroccan women lived in a *ḥarīm* or enclosed households where extended families lived together as one unit and women required permission from their husbands or other male family members before leaving a household (Sadiqi 2003). This was the case in Morocco at least until the declaration of independence from the French protectorate in 1956. As Ḥanna explains, the tradition of female seclusion strongly affected who could perform the Hajj:

> The man who went to Hajj from our village was a *faqīh.* He was an educated teacher who worked at the mosque… Not many people went to Hajj then and as little girls, Hajj felt way beyond our reach.

In general, until the 1990s, as in much of the Muslim Middle East, as in Morocco, religious education and participation in formal religious practices, such as mosque attendance and pilgrimage, were activities associated predominantly with men (cf. Mazumdar and Mazumdar 1999; 2002). The education of women was also lacking or at least secondary to men's (cf. Kandiyoti 1991). Paradoxically, women did represent a majority of religious practitioners of everyday religion. They were, for instance, very active in the local pilgrimages, such as visiting local saint shrines (Davis 1983; Smith 1980).

For women, right up to the present time, the performance of the Hajj remains more difficult than it is for men. One reason for this is that in line with the Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law, in Saudi Arabia it is considered unlawful for a woman to perform the Hajj in the absence of her husband or a close male relative.[228] These views have been integrated

[227] Muslim women hardly left behind any records of their own travel documenting their journeys which makes it difficult to estimate the numbers of women who performed the Hajj or the conditions of their travel from female perspective. Yet, Maliki fatwas from the 17th to 18th century, state safety, security, and proper accompaniment as conditions for women's travel to Hajj (Hendrickson 2016).

[228] Travel restrictions on women were not exclusive to the Wahhabi interpretation. Historically more conditions were placed on women wishing to perform the Hajj based on the *isṭiṭāʿa* (ability) condition derived from the Qur'anic verse "…Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by people who

into Hajj regulations, restricting the opportunities to perform Hajj for all Muslim women, regardless of their nationality or Islamic denomination (see Chapter Six). This provision is only relaxed for women over 45 years of age; they are allowed to travel in groups particularly organized for women without a *maḥram* but each group of women fall under the responsibility of a male escort, known as *rafīq* (see Chapter Two).[229]

Another obstacle that women may be confronted with concerns their responsibilities towards their families including husbands, children and often parents. This issue comes to the fore in the story of Salma, (Najat's mother and Ḥanna's daughter-in-law) who told me about her own Hajj experience:

> My husband went to the Hajj and *'umra* three times before I went. His first Hajj was with his work [as a religious guide and imam]. I performed Hajj in 2014; I applied in 2009 and could not go because my mother was sick and I could not leave her behind. I applied again in 2010 and 2012 but it was not until 2013 that I was successfully selected to perform the Hajj. I went alone with a group of other women; one man from the travel agency was responsible for us.

Al-ḥājja Salma's reflection on her Hajj experience echoes the stories of many women whom I came to know in Morocco. Although travel for the purpose of pilgrimage has in principle become an accepted pursuit for Moroccan women, due to traditional gender expectations, in practice women often sacrifice the obligation to perform Hajj in order to fulfill their duties towards their husbands, children and their responsibilities towards their wider families.

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are able to undertake it..." (Qur'an 3, 97). Thus, according to Hanafi and Hanbali schools, it is not permissible for women to perform the Hajj without *maḥram* company. Yet, according to Shafi'i and Maliki schools (Maliki School is dominant in North Africa including Morocco), the condition of *maḥram* company or that of the husband is not an obligatory condition since the *maḥram* company is a means to preserving her safety which can be achieved if women travel in a secured group. (Maghniyyah 1997, 10-11).

[229] According to local official, there is no limit to the number of women that a male pilgrim can accompany as *rafīq* during Hajj.

Becoming a *ḥājja*: cultural capital in shared narratives of the Hajj experience

In the public sphere, being addressed as *al-ḥājja* is a form of cultural capital for women who have performed the Hajj. The term cultural capital refers to non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means. It also refers to a person's distinctive skills, knowledge and practices that promote social mobility and allow people to enhance their social position (Crawford and Newcomb 2013, 66). While some female pilgrims, particularly younger ones, do not mind if people do not use the honorific title upon their return, others insist on it.

Demanding to be called *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja*, makes a claim to a special status in terms of piety and wisdom, and often also can be seen to be resonant in terms of economic status, as signifying someone who could afford to go on Hajj. Such claims are increasingly being contested, however. One also finds people who have performed Hajj who question the habit of paying special tribute to a person who has been to Mecca (see Chapter Four).

The rules of etiquette are subtle, however; pilgrims are expected to convey their new status among the local community in a discreet fashion. Although displaying their entitlement to the title of *al-ḥājj/al-ḥājja* openly is part of demonstrating their piety, to demand openly to be addressed by the honorific title or to boast about one's religious status demonstrates a lack of propriety and, more importantly, draws into question one's credibility as an exemplary Muslim. It is only a thin line between accorded respect for achieved spiritual enrichment and being accused of using the honorific title as claimed marker of superiority. In order to comply with cultural expectations, pilgrims should capitalize on their new status with care.

In Chapter Four I introduced Nisrin, a young woman who expressed criticism towards the request of a friend for her mother to call her *al-ḥājja*. Nisrin questioned the automatic use of the title *al-ḥājja* for those who performed the Hajj since the respect thus claimed is something that should be gained through recognition of one's piety by others. Yet, for many women, the symbolic capital that comes with becoming *al-ḥājja*

provides access to other forms of capital within Moroccan society. The next section gives an example from Fes where a young woman was able to negotiate her position within the local community after performing the Hajj.

Hajj and access to religious capital

At the time of my fieldwork, Sawsan was 32 years old, born and raised in Fes within a financially comfortable family as she characterized it. Sawsan performed the Hajj in 2012 together with her father. Since then, she has become one of the most respected young women in her neighborhood. Younger and older women come to seek her advice on daily matters and request her religious guidance, as she enjoys cultural and religious status among the women of her neighborhood.[230]

In Sawsan's case, her privileged status as the daughter of a well-known official already provided her with access to large social networks. Her new title, *al-ḥājja*, allowed her to claim an additional higher moral stance and to exert religious influence on women in her family's network. I was told that Sawsan was already known as a wise young woman before she went on Hajj. Yet, only after the completion of her Hajj, did women begin to come to her house and seek her advice. Sawsan's mother told me proudly:

> I felt that she was going to perform Hajj whilst young. Now, she is *al-ḥājja*, she has religious knowledge and many women come to seek her wise advice… The women ask her about daily issues they struggle with and she is happy to give them advice.

For Sawsan, her religious knowledge and her ability to articulate that knowledge by offering advice to women function as religious capital and as a marker of her social status. In the eyes of those who know her, being a *ḥājja* at such a young age proves that she is religiously devoted, for

[230] I have classified the acquisition of religious knowledge through Hajj as both cultural and religious capital because the process strongly resembles that of an educational process. The power of religious capital lies in how it represents a form of power.

which she deserves respect and a position of authority among young women in her neighborhood.

Sawsan demonstrates her religious knowledge at woman's gatherings by giving advice and offering her opinion on different issues. During a women's meeting that I attended in October 2016, I noted that women asked Sawsan many questions about the Hajj and *ʿumra*. They wanted to hear her opinion when Saudi Arabia's government decided to increase the fees of the Hajj entry visa. When she spoke, both young and old women listened attentively to what Sawsan had to say and nodded in agreement. Sawsan also displayed her piety in the way in which she dressed and by interspersing Islamic terms in her daily conversations. Her parents reconfirmed Sawsan's high religious reputation by calling her *al-ḥājja* when they talked about her to other people.

Sawsan's extraordinary position as a young pilgrim helped her to accumulate indicators of distinction and prestige. However, it is important to recognize that such prestige or symbolic capital exists only as far as it is recognized in the eyes of others (cf. Bourdieu 1990). By increasing her religious knowledge through her performance of the Hajj and subsequently sharing her knowledge and experiences with other women and helping them to overcome daily dilemmas, Sawsan gained respect in her local community.

Sawsan's case is not unique; I noted numerous occasions where having been on Hajj provided Moroccan women with self-confidence and a legitimate foundation from which to access power within their social networks. Some qualifications are in place here, however. First of all, this power predominantly applies in female networks where the subject is frequently present.[231] What characterizes Sawsan's case is that her elevated religious status spilled over into other domains: she is often invited to participate in social events such as weddings, birth celebrations, and women's, gatherings something that can also be related

[231] It must be noted that in Sawsan's case her father also showed much pride in her being a young pilgrim. I observed, for example, how he would also pay close attention to her when she was giving her views and that he also occasionally asked her advice.

to her family's social position.[232] This illustrates that, more broadly, the pilgrimage experience is also a social project and that a valuable asset of pilgrimage concerns the fact that it also provides additional social capital in the sense of "strategic positioning" (cf. Bourdieu 1986).

The story of Sawsan, as well as the earlier narrative and song of Ḥanna, were somewhat similar to that of Barbara Cooper's analysis of Hausa women's pilgrimage accounts in which she shows how women aim to acquire authoritative religious space by sharing their Hajj stories and this also allows them to talk openly about themselves and their lives (Cooper 1999, 91). Susan O'Brien notes the social significance of the pilgrimage for Hausa Bori women who distinguish themselves from other Muslim Hausa women and express a sense of mobility and power through their pilgrimage experiences. For Moroccan women, being able to perform the Hajj is considered a sign of success which is also a major topic of discussion in women's social gatherings.

A second qualification that should be made relates to the ways in which social stratification in Morocco affects how the Hajj performance of female pilgrims from different socio-economic positions is assessed. The criteria that determine the symbolic capital that Hajj performance may generate change in each context, depending on cultural as well as socio-economic factors. While Sawsan gained much respect and religious capital in her social network after performing Hajj, this may not be the case for women from less privileged backgrounds. I will demonstrate this in the next section by discussing the Hajj stories of Lubna, a pilgrim from Mohammedia, who is only three years older than Sawsan, but comes from a very different social background.

Social capital, pilgrimage and financial needs

The travel and accommodation costs involved make it almost impossible to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca for people who have limited financial

[232] Both men and women who have gone on Hajj enjoy social capital yet my focus here is on women's perspectives.

means. Most Moroccans I encountered considered the fees for Hajj travel packages excessively high. In fact due to traditional financial structures as I will discuss later, only a limited number of women were financially able to perform Hajj (see also Chapter Two).[233] Those who could afford it were often either women with affluent husbands who paid for them, or women who ran their own business or had inherited some money. Sawsan's mother, for instance, was able to perform Hajj after the death of her father using her inheritance money whilst Sawsan's pilgrimage was largely financed by her father. For women who have very little or no financial capital, it is much harder to perform pilgrimage.

One of those women is Lubna, who grew up in an impoverished urban neighborhood in Mohammedia, a city that is part of the larger economic conglomeration around Casablanca. Lubna is the oldest of four children, which means that from an early age, she shared in her parents' responsibilities for taking care of her younger siblings. She lost her father in 2004, not long after she started her first job as a daily worker in a car-parts factory. Since then, she has been the family breadwinner and has faced many challenges, including the illness of her mother and brother.

Lubna remembers well how impressed she was as a child whenever her mother would tell her the story about the Hajj journey of her great grandfather, who, as her mother expressed it: "walked on his feet from Morocco to Mecca." As a result, from her childhood onwards, every time she heard the description of the sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina, Lubna felt a strong desire to go there herself. Recently, her dreams came true; in 2015 she performed the Hajj, which is quite extraordinary for a woman in her position. Financially, she could not have afforded to pay for the Hajj herself. Lubna was very lucky, however, to win in an annual lottery her employer organized to provide three workers with 50,000 Moroccan dirhams (approx. 5,000 Euros) earmarked for the Hajj journey.

[233] For more information on gendered social and financial structures in Morocco (that might distinguish women from men in terms of financial independence), see, for example Sadiqi (2010); Ennaji (2016); Booley (2016).

However, the responses Lubna received from her fellow factory workers and from family and friends in the neighborhood when she won the prize money that would enable her to buy a package tour for the Hajj confronted her with her marginal position as a poor and single woman. She vividly recalls how everyone coveted the prize:

> I still remember how everyone gathered, waiting to hear the next name. The manager took a folded piece of paper out of the box in front of him, and read the name out loud: Lubna, congratulations! I could not believe it at first, but I acted indifferent. A female friend standing next to me touched my arm and congratulated me. A male colleague standing to my left said: 'If you do not want it; give it to me!'

While it is possible that her male colleague may have been joking, Lubna would soon learn that while they would not say so to her face, some people deemed it more appropriate that a young and poor woman like Lubna should renounce the prize in favor of somebody else. Lubna decided to ignore the gossips that reached her ears and focus on overcoming the next obstacle to realize her dream.

Indeed, winning the lottery as such was no guarantee that Lubna would actually be able to perform the Hajj. The way to Mecca was still long, as she found out when trying to register for a Hajj visa at the local governmental pilgrimage department. The local male governor informed her that, prize or no prize, like all Moroccans, Lubna would have to go through the visa lottery system, the qurʿa, before she could undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Two problems occurred in this process. The first was that thousands of people applied in Lubna's governorate and only 390 visas were available for people in that area. The chance that Lubna would be among the lucky ones selected in the qurʿa was therefore very small. The other, more serious, issue was that in accordance with Saudi Arabia's policy concerning male guardianship for woman, Lubna could not even register without a *maḥram,* a legitimate male companion. Lubna thus faced the task of finding a male relative who was willing and able to accompany her

on the journey to Mecca.[234] She decided to ask her grandfather. At the age of 85, he belonged to the category of the eldest 15 percent of registered applicants who are automatically selected to perform the pilgrimage without having to go through the lottery system.[235] Several uncles stepped in to raise enough money to buy Lubna's grandfather a Hajj package tour.

Ironically, while it was Lubna who needed a male companion in order to be able to perform the Hajj, in the official records she was eventually registered as the companion of her fragile grandfather rather than the other way around. Her grandfather was privileged because of his old age while Lubna was disadvantaged both because of her gender and her age. Lubna told me that she was happy that her grandfather could perform the Hajj because of her.

Having found a way to overcome the restrictions imposed on her as a female pilgrim, Lubna was now ready to prepare for her Hajj journey. As it turned out, however, her worries were not over yet. When I met her for the first time, Lubna had just come back from Mecca. Upon her return to Morocco, she had expected that, in line with local etiquette, many visitors, including family members, friends and neighbors would come to her house to congratulate her on her safe return. During the first few days following her return, indeed, some family members and close friends did visit her. Lubna's neighbors, however, and many women whom she considered her friends, never came to her house to congratulate her. Lubna explained this to me by referring to the gossip her decision not to relinquish her prize had caused and of being called "a woman! Unfit to perform Hajj because of poverty and young age," as she put it. She

[234] Also, when I accompanied a group of pilgrims on *ʿumra* in 2016 and 2018, my father acted as my male companion in order to be able to go on this minor pilgrimage.

[235] In Morocco, the eldest 15 percent of pilgrims do not go through the lottery system in order to give more opportunity to older people to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. In 2016, the oldest pilgrim of this 15 percent eldest applicants was 95 years old and the youngest of them was born in 1933; 83 years old. These oldest pilgrims were allowed to be accompanied by one person to look after them who would not have to go through the lottery system as well.

suspected that behind her back, her neighbors and friends accused her of being conceited and not knowing her place.

To understand the willful breach of etiquette by Lubna's neighbors and her disappointment about their behavior it is helpful to reflect on the socio-cultural context in which the views and experiences of the various parties that feature in her Hajj story are embedded. In a poor neighborhood like Lubna's, it is very rare that people have the means to go to Mecca. The Hajj is by and large conceived of as a practice of a higher class of people who lead different lives, a privilege beyond the reach of one's own kind. While those who are better off are envied for being able to fulfill desires that remain beyond reach for oneself, such envy is impersonal and generalized, concerning unknown people outside one's own orbit.

Lubna's story illustrates that if, on the contrary, a person from one's own circle achieves something that was not deemed possible for one's own kind, the confrontation with one's own unfulfilled desires can be unsettling. A young woman with modest means who performs the Hajj defies social expectations. For this, she had to be punished: first, by reminding her of her place by accusing her behind her back of considering herself better than other women in the neighborhood; second, by breaching the local etiquette of paying her a congratulatory visit upon her return from Mecca. Lubna was to be punished for the potential threat her success implied for other people's habitual acceptance of their own disadvantaged situation. However, ultimately, by defying the unstated norms, Lubna showed that maybe disadvantaged situations were not so 'set in stone' as people might think.

Fortunately, Lubna's recollections about the resentment of her neighbors and former friends were not the last of her Hajj stories. Thanks to the bonding that resulted from sharing similar experiences during Hajj, Lubna managed to build meaningful relationships with fellow female pilgrims, thus being able to extend her social network beyond her daily environment. Not only did she feel appreciated by the women with whom she had performed the pilgrimage, but through her contacts with them, she also gained access to the different layers of society to which many of

her fellow pilgrims belonged. Cultivating her relationships with her new pilgrim friends thus compensated for the loss of former friendships and provided Lubna with social capital that allowed her to reach out to a world beyond her old social network. In a way, Lubna expressed her feelings of being empowered by the pilgrimage and its aftermath.[236]

Lubna's story reminds us of the importance of taking an intersectional approach in studying the experiences of Hajj pilgrims; age, class and gender intersect in a very specific way in both her physical and social mobility. Her story demonstrates the enormous impact of the socio-cultural context on the gendered views on, and experiences of, people concerning the Hajj. Lubna's *habitus* and everyday life, particularly her social background and economic status, were reflected in her expectations and experiences of the Hajj, as much as her gender. The fact that her uncles were willing to finance the Hajj of her equally poor grandfather whereas Lubna experienced social pressure to relinquish the money prize for her own Hajj journey, points to the influence of patriarchal views and practices that affect Moroccan female and male pilgrims differently.

I will therefore look into the impact of patriarchal views on women's mobility that continue to inform Moroccan culture on the Hajj experiences of female pilgrims.

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[236] Studies of other religious traditions also reflect on how pilgrims empower themselves through pilgrimage (cf. Hermkens et al. 2009; Jansen and Notermans 2012). A few chapters of Hermkens et al. *Moved by Mary: The power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World* discuss examples of gender empowerment through pilgrimage. Janine Klungel, for example, argues, that the pilgrimage to Mary is integrated into women's efforts to stabilize their way of life. Similar cases of women's empowerment are seen by Lena Gemzöe who shows how, by honoring Mary directly, women in Portugal keep away from intermediaries and thus gain a sense of empowerment. In another article of Gemzöe in *Gender, Nation and Religion in European Pilgrimage* (Jansen and Notermans 2012), she emphasizes the power of pilgrimage in the lives of Swedish females facing midlife crises who embark on foot pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela. In the same volume, Anna Fedele examines how the pilgrimage to the Mary Magdalene shrine in southern France helps women in escaping what they see as the patriarchy of established religion.

Women's Hajj, power and patriarchy

Al-ḥājja Zahra, whom I introduced in Chapter Three, is one of the women whom I came to know in Fes. Zahra is the first wife of a successful local businessman and has been to Mecca for the Hajj with her husband many years ago. Yet, since her pilgrimage, her husband has been on Hajj again with his younger wife and performs the *ʿumra* on a nearly annual basis accompanied by the second wife to look after his needs whilst in Mecca. In Chapter Three, I quoted Zahra whilst she was expressing her longing for Mecca and the pain burning in her chest due to her inability to go on *ʿumra.* Being financially dependent on her husband, Zahra was unable to fulfill her wish. The story of Zahra is one example of how women are met with more obstacles than men when it comes to the ability to travel for pilgrimage.

In the past, the mostly conventionally organized family units in Morocco were characterized by patriarchal views and it was clear that related hierarchical practices prevailed (cf. Sadiqi 2003). To act outside the permission of male family members was very difficult and risky for women. Although family structures and the recognition of women's rights have developed in Morocco over the years, it is clear that patterns in familial power relations have not changed to the same extent (cf. Ouguir 2013).[237] In general, men continue to have more authority than women, especially over their wives and unmarried daughters (Sadiqi 2003). As a result, female family members tend to be more restricted in their freedom of movement than male family members. Therefore, besides the fact that for every woman under the age of 45 who wishes to go on Hajj there would need to be enough money for the additional Hajj journey of her male companion, women also face the obstacle of getting permission from their male relatives to go in the first place.

As Zahra's story shows, in present-day Moroccan society, "the word of a man" (in Moroccan Arabic, *kilma-d-ar-rijāl*) can control the mobility

[237] For more information on Moroccan women's rights movement and reforms in family law, see, among others Buskens (2003; 2006) Evrard (2014); Ouguir (2013); Sadiqi (2008); Weingartner (2005); Wuerth (2005).

of his female relatives (Sadiqi 2003). As I had the opportunity to see Zahra on several occasions, I witnessed her bringing up the issue of her longing to return to Mecca repeatedly, and each time her words were accompanied by tears and sighs. One of her most repeated remarks was that she feared she would die before being able to set eyes on the Kaʿba again. Zahra's grievances are aggravated by the fact that since her husband married his second wife, this younger woman gets to accompany him on his *ʿumra* trips. This privilege has become the focus of attention in the rivalry between the two wives. In this sense, Zahra's longing for Mecca should be interpreted in terms of her feelings about her marital situation as much as her desire to live a pious life.

In the context of Moroccan patriarchal family relations, women often have to act strategically to negotiate 'permission' from their male relatives for their movements outside the house. In this situation, bargaining with others to speak to their husbands can be an effective tactic. Zahra, for example, spoke to people who were close to her husband, such as his sister-in-law, her sons-in-law, and her husband's older brother. The conversations with her relatives that I witnessed reflected a process of negotiation in which both male and female family members were involved.

In some cases, the permission women seek from their husbands is not a permission in any formal sense, but more of an agreement. Many women that I got to know during my fieldwork performed the pilgrimage to Mecca alongside their husbands. To go on pilgrimage with one's spouse appeared to be the simplest way to avoid disagreements or restrictions imposed by the husband. It also reduces the risk of becoming the object of gossip: in the eyes of outsiders, the legitimacy of women who perform pilgrimage is enhanced if they do so to accompany their husbands as dutiful wives. Therefore, while in religious terms the Hajj of a woman equals that of a man, the symbolic capital that male pilgrims gain by Hajj performance tends, as a general rule, to be more significant and weigh more than that of female pilgrims.[238]

[238] According to my female interlocutors, male pilgrims participate in several community events such as resolving conflicts, mediation between people, and

Women, symbolic capital, and the male's ability to perform the pilgrimage

Since pilgrimage to Mecca is obligatory for both Muslim men and women who are able to perform it according to the Maliki school of Islamic law, some women invest heavily in tactical maneuvering in order to fulfill their religious duty. Other women, however, put male relatives – particularly their husbands – before themselves when it comes to efforts to allow one family member to perform the Hajj. In this sense, even women for whom the Hajj is beyond personal reach can influence travel to Hajj indirectly. It would be a mistake to interpret such activities in terms of altruism only. Creating or enhancing a relationship of indebtedness can be an effective way to exert power over others, particularly for those who have limited access to formal power (cf. O'Brien 1999).

During my fieldwork I came across several examples of women who exerted this hidden power. Approaching Hajj performance as a family project by assisting family members to go to Mecca was a common phenomenon among the women I met. As mothers and housewives, women play a principal role in transmitting socio-cultural norms and values and providing encouragement and support. In the next subsection I explore how a wife could play a pivotal role in the pilgrimage of her husband. I will focus on the story of Najla, mother of Yusra, whom I introduced in Chapter Four.[239] When I interviewed Najla about her husband's pilgrimage to Mecca, she began her story as follows:

> There was this time when I told my husband, 'I have a feeling you will go on Hajj'. He said: '*Min fummik li-Allāh* [May these words will go directly from your mouth to God]'.[240] I told him that I had a good feeling about it. I registered his name,

witnesses to contracts. In family gatherings, they are often invited to make supplication prayers at the end of a gathering or following a meal for blessing. The Women's role, however, is more confined to women's gatherings in more private settings.

[239] I will discuss the story of Najla further also in Chapter Ten.

[240] *Min fummik li-Allāh* (From your mouth to God) is a local expression that indicates hopes for whatever has been said to be realized (May God fulfil your wish or May what you wish would come true).

> attended the selection process, and there it was... They called the first name, then the second and … the third was his, the name of my husband.

Najla herself has not performed the Hajj. She knew that her husband wished to go but that he did not have the financial means and therefore kept postponing his registration year after year. Without consulting her husband, she decided to register his name for the *qurʿa* at a local governmental office in Mohammedia where they lived.[241] In her view, her husband's intention, or *niyya*, to go on pilgrimage needed to be pushed forwards and she was the one to make that step on his behalf. Smiling somewhat triumphantly, Najla told me:

> After every prayer, my husband would put his hands up and pray: 'Oh God; I hope that these hands will be washed with Zamzam water'. One day I was coming back from work when I saw a poster about the Hajj registration. I thought to myself, that's his opportunity, I will go and register my husband; we did not have the financial means or anything to help us make it happen, but I did not think about that at the time; all I thought about is that I can help my husband in making his wish come true.

Besides providing verbal support and encouragement, Najla saw it as her responsibility to give practical support to her husband in proceeding on the path to his pilgrimage. She recalled that upon leaving the registration center and walking back to her house, she wondered what other people would think when hearing that she had registered her husband for the visa lottery. She noted: "They might think that I control my husband." Once at home she told her husband what she had done. She clearly remembered the happiness she saw on his face when he realized what his wife had done for him.

A few months later, again without her husband, Najla joined the hundreds of men and women who had gathered at the registration center to hear the results of the Hajj *qurʿa*. When her husband was mentioned, she was overjoyed and phoned him to deliver the good news that he would be able to perform the Hajj in the year to come. Having come this

[241] For more information about the *qurʿa* process, see Chapter Two.

far, Najla faced a new responsibility: finding the necessary funds to make it possible financially for her husband to perform the Hajj. She told me:

> We did not have any *santīm*![242] Our savings amounted to around 4,000 dirhams in total [around 400 Euros]; not much at all compared to the 45,000 dirhams [4,500 Euros] that we needed for Hajj fees [at that time]. I told him, 'Let's ask the school for a loan of 20,000 [2,000 Euros] over our salaries'. Next, I called my sister in Italy and asked if she could give us 1,000 Euros. I was involved in a money saving project with the teachers at my school and we had saved about 10,000 dirhams [1,000 Euros] in that group. We put all the money together and I went to pay. After making the payment at the bank, I only had 200 dirhams [20 Euros] left in my purse.

Najla's role did not end there; she next took on the responsibility of managing the salaries of her husband and herself to save the money needed to buy the necessary items for Hajj such as his *iḥrām* clothes, shoes, and other needs. When her husband finally left for Mecca, she made sure to tell him how to spend the money he took with him and what gifts to buy. She herself spent days shopping in Casablanca for Hajj gifts for friends and family who would come to congratulate her husband upon his return. She bought prayer mats, beads, scarfs and other gifts. She also worked for many days preparing sweets and food for the return of her husband.

While Cooper and O'Brien mainly focus on the stories of women who had performed the Hajj themselves, I noted that Moroccan women who have not performed the pilgrimage can still be active agents in the process that lead their male relatives to perform pilgrimage to Mecca. Like Najla, women would take center stage in their stories and speak about their roles confidently and in detail. The culturally specific nature of power and influence wielded by women thus came to the fore both in

[242] The word *santīm* comes from the French word centime meaning one cent. One *santīm*, is worth 1/100 of a dirham. There is no smaller currency than a *santīm* and although it is no longer minted, Moroccans sometimes refer to financial quantities in *santīm*. The smallest coins currency in today's Morocco is 10 centimes and 20 centimes. In their daily conversations, Moroccans would also refer to *franc* (same worth as *santīm*) *and riyal* (one dirham = 20 *riyal*) as financial measurement currencies.

the performance of the Hajj itself and in the content of the Hajj stories that women told me either in person or at women's gatherings I attended.

From these performances and stories, I learned that wives may play both a motivational and a practical role in encouraging and supporting their husband's pilgrimage. In her stories about the pilgrimage of her husband Najla claims authority by presenting herself as the motor behind the success. This production of symbolic capital through narratives, and sometimes stories and songs, justifies and acknowledges the position of those who could not go to Mecca vis-à-vis those who did perform the Hajj. Although Najla herself was not the one who performed the pilgrimage in Mecca, she nonetheless claimed authority as active agent in the process that allowed her husband to perform pilgrimage.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how female agency comes to the fore in Moroccan women's stories about pilgrimage to Mecca. Focusing on the stories of women from diverse age groups and socio-economic classes allowed me to relate women's Hajj experiences to their mobility in everyday life and to the various forms of capital needed for and generated by performance of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Until recently, because of the physical and social mobility implicit in visiting Mecca, most Moroccans tended to associate the Hajj performance with men rather than women, whom they associate with more local pilgrimages to saint's shrines. Although the number of female pilgrims from Morocco has grown over the last few decades, the stories presented in this chapter addressed the challenges that women continue to face before they are able to go on pilgrimage to Mecca.

Some challenges affect all women, such as restrictions on women's mobility due to patriarchal traditions, according to which women fall under the guardianship of men. A major obstacle for all female pilgrims is that, according to Saudi Hajj regulations, women under the age of 45 need to be accompanied by a male guardian. But, as the stories of Zahra illustrate, living in a polygamous marriage is a patriarchal Moroccan

tradition that can become particularly painful when tensions between marriage partners are played out in relation to the issue of which wife gets to join the male head of household to cook and do the laundry for him on his journey to Mecca. At the same time, framing marital tensions in terms of being thwarted in one's efforts to develop one's piety by revisiting Mecca, Zahra has a powerful tool to negotiate her position as first wife.

Culturally conditioned gender expectations may also result in women prioritizing their domestic responsibilities as care givers for family members over their ambition to fulfill the religious obligation of Hajj performance, as Najla did. Again, such choices should not be interpreted one-sidedly as pointing to women's lack of agency. The story of Najla illustrates that women may have their own reasons for investing in facilitating other family members' ability to perform the Hajj. For one thing, they often share in the religious prestige that comes from having a pilgrim in the family. Moreover, by putting such efforts in helping others to go to Mecca, women can lay claims on the same family members and thus improve their position in the family.

Besides factors that affect all women, Hajj performance can also be hampered by the specific ways in which women are positioned in different sets of power relations, for example on the basis of their age or socio-economic position. The stories I have discussed here thus illustrate the need to take an intersectional approach in order to understand how women's Hajj experiences are related to their mobilities. Ḥanna, the old woman who sang a Hajj song for me, grew up at a time when Moroccan participation in the pilgrimage to Mecca was rare. Her song not only reflects the enormous symbolic significance of such extraordinary occasions of women departing for Mecca, but also refers to the envy this caused among those who stayed behind.

Envy plays a major role in the Hajj stories of Lubna, the young lower-class woman who was able to go on Hajj thanks to the factory lottery she won. Lubna suffered from the resentment of her neighbors and friends who considered it ludicrous for a woman in her position to perform Hajj. Yet, making new friends among her fellow pilgrims opened up

opportunities for Lubna for upward social mobility. Contrary to the criticism that befell Lubna, on the basis of her privileged status as the daughter of a well-known official with a broad network, the equally young and single Sawsan gained powerful symbolic capital through her Hajj performance. The honorific title *al-ḥājja* allowed her to claim a powerful, moral position among the women in her family's network.

The negative experiences of Lubna, a devout and well-intentioned pilgrim, it seemed to me, who found herself excluded from the social capital normally accorded to those who complete Hajj, is revealing. It illuminates the – possibly unrecognized – conflict that exists between social status, defined by wealth and position, and religious capital, defined by devotional aspirations and achievements. Those who refused to accord to Lubna the normal honorific titles and traditional greeting rituals on return, clearly considered the capital associated with class of greater significance than spiritual capital. Given the core precept of Islam as a religion of equality, this is revealing of the power dynamics in modern Moroccan society.

This fact also possibly gives the explanation as to why Sawsan – the pilgrim whose social prestige was already established by virtue of her family's position – was treated in a quite different manner than Lubna. Her completion of the Hajj added a further layer of recognition to her already elevated status. This meant that she was viewed as possessing wisdom and judgement greater than her age might suggest, and possibly, greater than the reality of her accomplishments warranted. The dominance of class considerations and perceived appropriateness (financial and physical ability) thus insert themselves even into the religious domain.

The specific stories of individual women that I have discussed are at the same time very personal as well as representative of broader cultural patterns that inform Moroccan women's desires, views and practices of the pilgrimage to Mecca. In this sense, they underline Tonkin's argument that, in various ways, narrators are formed by their own narratives; the stories my interlocutors shared with me contain both scripted and

unscripted elements relating to the specific intersecting positions of the women involved in Moroccan society.

In this chapter, it has been clear that class and gender play a role in the conceptions of one's worthiness of the social prestige involved in the use of the title *ḥājj* or *ḥājja*, which is accorded to those visiting Mecca as a pilgrim. In the next chapter I will focus on another aspect related to the pilgrimage to Mecca in Morocco: the Pilgrimage of the Poor.

PART THREE

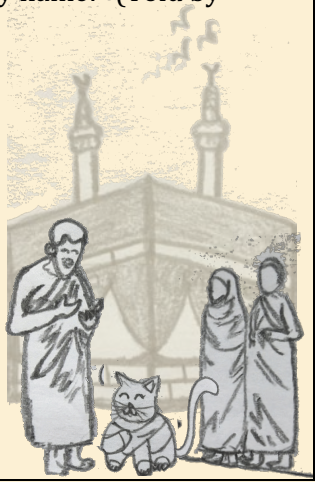
The Pilgrimage: Informing Everyday Life

Light-hearted Approach to Hajj Narratives: Hajj in Moroccan Humor

The purpose of introducing these humorous anecdotes in this 'intermezzo' vignette to Part Three is to illustrate the abundant presence of Hajj in the linguistic repertoire of Moroccans. The pilgrimage permeates the thought and emotions of believers, surfacing in daily utterances and literary forms of all kinds. Part Three of this thesis deals with the social and cultural embeddedness of the Hajj in the lives of Moroccans including those who cannot afford the 'real' Hajj. Alternative pilgrimages, songs that Moroccans sing, and the stories that people tell are examples of this embeddedness. The aim of the two jokes here is to set the scene. Humor is an indicator of a whole range of social and culture dispositions, and so are local practices, songs and tales which will be the themes of the three following chapters.

I. There was a Moroccan man who returned from Hajj. He went to a nearby shop in his neighborhood where he was a regular customer. He asked the owner to show him the record of his debt in the shopkeeper's loan notebook. The man was excited thinking that *al-ḥājj* was about to pay the debt. He opened the notebook and pointed to one page. The pilgrim said: "Where is my name?" The shop owner answered: "Here it is, *al-ḥājj*!." The pilgrim nodded his head and said: "Well, now you can write '*al-ḥājj*' in front of my name!" (Told by Sarah, Ouezzane, 14/10/2016)

II. There was an old lady who told a lot of lies. Her children said: "Let's send her to Hajj so that she will be decent and stop lying." So she went to Hajj and returned. Her children waited for her at the airport and upon welcoming her back they asked her: "*Al-ḥājja*, how was your travel?" She said: "Oh, what can I say? The airplane broke down and was stationed in the middle of the sky; we had to get out and push it to move!" (Told by Hassan, Safi, 09/09/2016).



CHAPTER EIGHT

'Pilgrimage of the Poor': Moroccan Local Hajj

The power of the word in Morocco belonged to men and to the authorities. No one asked the point of view of poor people or women.
(Tahar Ben Jelloun)[243]

Introduction

On the Day of Arafat pilgrims gather at the plain of Arafat as an obligatory rite of the Hajj. On the same day, hundreds of people gather in a small coastline site in Morocco, known as Sīdī Shāshkāl where they perform rituals similar to those of the Hajj. When I displayed an interest in visiting the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl, some Moroccan friends agreed to accompany me. Therefore, on 11 September 2016, four of us left the local bus station in Safi with a few local residents who were heading in the same direction.

We branched off the main street and drove on the coastal road along with other cars and trucks for around half an hour before we saw the place. As we walked down to the shore, dozens of people were putting up their small stalls to sell clothes, spices, coal, ceramic dishes and much more, all of which I learned were necessities for *ʿīd l-kbīr* taking place the following day. A large slaughtered calf was hanging for a local butcher's customers to see. Food vendors were scattered along the street that led down to the coast. We looked down at the golden sand, and then walked on, passing groups of people as we approached the beach itself. Within a matter of minutes, we had reached the only construction on the beach, the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl, which had been prepared for a pilgrimage ritual, locally known as *ḥajj al-miskīn,* which translates as the Pilgrimage of the Poor.

The pilgrimage took place around a small shrine located on large rocks near the shore. Like many shrines to saints scattered around

[243] Tahar Ben Jelloun is Moroccan-French novelist and writer who wrote expressively about Moroccan culture and the immigrant experience.

Morocco, on top of the rocks, there was a four-sided packed-earth building with a distinctive structure, a *qubba* or dome, over the building. The rites of the Pilgrimage of the Poor continued from the early morning until the late afternoon as people gathered in groups around the old building commemorating the parallel pilgrimage faraway near Mecca. In contrast with the pilgrimage near Mecca, local residents visited Sīdī Shāshkāl on the day preceding *ʿīd l-kbīr*, in order to imitate the Hajj, asking for God's acceptance and forgiveness, and praying for blessings for their children, health, and wealth.

Near the site, we followed a group of local men to a small, round room surrounded by dilapidated walls which were all that remained of a structure, which had been a mosque in the past, as I was told later. I followed some women into the round room; a woman in a yellow *jellaba*, carrying two candles, entered before me. She removed her flip-flops – as a sign of respect, I was told – and stepped onto the old dusty floor. She added her candles to others already on the floor, together with some coins. Next, she touched the walls to her right, whispering prayers for blessings. After this, she moved her hands over her own body starting from her forehead down to her legs. She then sat on the floor next to two other women. The place was too small even for the four of us and, as more people tried to enter, the two of women sitting on the floor stood up and left. I followed them shortly afterwards.

As I walked out of the room, I came face to face with an old man wearing traditional clothes. As he walked up the broken steps, assisted by a long stick, he repeated over and over again: "May God accept your pilgrimage! Oh the Pilgrimage of the Poor!" As he made his prayer, men and women stopped to greet him and some handed him a few coins. He slipped the coins into the pocket of his *jellaba* and continued to make prayers. I stood next to the man and asked him about the ritual taking place at the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl. He told me: "This is our Hajj... Like those performing Hajj in Arafat near Mecca, we have our Arafat here… May God accept it… We all worship God." [244]

[244] Fieldnotes, 11/09/2016.

During my research, I was able to participate in two local pilgrimages of people unable to undertake the Hajj to Mecca. These pilgrimages are viewed, by those who undertake them, as alternative spiritual journeys, substitutions, out of necessity, for the Hajj proper. I refer here to the pilgrimage to Sīdī Shāshkāl on the West coast and also the pilgrimage to the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār in the Rif mountains of northern Morocco. In what follows, I will touch on the major existing research on these alternative pilgrimages, then describe the rituals and practices I observed during my fieldwork before considering how these pilgrimages are viewed by participants. I shall also explore ways in which other citizens and fellow Muslims, who do not undertake the Pilgrimage of the Poor, view these religious observances.

In my search for secondary resources discussing the Pilgrimage of the Poor, I was able to find two sources, one on each pilgrimage that I shall discuss in this chapter. The first was a small booklet in Arabic by Moroccan researcher and historian Ibrahim Krediyeh, who lives in Safi and who tried to uncover some of the explanatory narratives about the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl including its origins, which I will discuss later in this chapter. I found the second account in David Hart's detailed ethnography, *The Aith Waryagher of the Moroccan Rif* (1976). In a chapter discussing Islam in the Rif, Hart covers the local pilgrimage to Sīdī Bū Khiyār (Ibid, 178-181). He narrates the story of Sidi Mhand (buried north of Sīdī Bū Khiyār), who had arranged with local people to perform a pilgrimage to his site in the Rif mountains, insisting that the whole ritual should resemble the pilgrimage to Mecca. Sidi Mhand, according to Hart, told local pilgrims that performing the poor man's pilgrimage, is equal to half a pilgrimage to Mecca. On one occasion when the people present wanted to pray before noon, Sidi Mhand told them instead to wait until noon – at which point he miraculously opened the skies so that they could see Mecca and the holy places of Islam. Arguably, the Pilgrimage of the Poor has acquired some of its status from this historic narrative which validates its worth in direct relationship with the Hajj to Mecca. David Hart attended this pilgrimage on August 1, 1955. Almost sixty-three years later, I attended the event as it is documented in this chapter.

The belief in and veneration of local saints is seen by many authors as one of the central aspects of 'Moroccan Islam' (Hammoudi 1997; Eickelman 1976; Geertz 1969; Gellner 1968).[245] In Morocco, a saint is referred to as master, *walī* or *sayyid*, and less commonly, as *marabout*, a French term, from the Arabic *murabiṭun* or "tied to God" (cf. Eickelman 1974, 220).[246] Such sanctified persons are popularly believed to possess the attribute of *baraka*.[247] The lodge or building associated primarily with a wali or with a religious order often qualifies as *zāwiya* (plural *zawāya*) and such places are visited by individuals and groups of Moroccans. The visit, *ziyāra,* to the *zāwiya* or to other tombs of saints can take place at any time of the year in addition to the annual festivals, called *mawāsim* (Eickelman 1976, 7).[248] It is not the mission of this chapter, however, to discuss the nature of sainthood in Morocco, a subject that has been treated in numerous academic works (such as those of Cornell 1998; Combs-Schilling 1989; Eickelman 1976; Gellner 1969; and Geertz 1968 to name but a few).

The focus on the saints and their visits in this chapter is directly related to the practice of the Pilgrimage of the Poor which takes place at a specific time of the year and resonates with elements of the pilgrimage to Mecca. It is a practice contested even by people who would regularly perform a *ziyāra* to saintly shrines in Morocco, a devotional ritual which does not seek to assume parity with Hajj. However, pilgrimage destinations other than the holy Kaʿba in Mecca are a controversial subject for some Muslims, both in Morocco and beyond (cf. Deeb 2006;

[245] A saint is a person, elect in the eyes of God, whose life is an example unto his or her people. For more on saints in Africa see, among many others, Soares (2004); Schulz (2003); O'Brien (1988).

[246] In general, *marabout* is a certain persons who may have a special relationship with God which makes him serve as intermediaries between people and God (Eickelman 1974, 220).

[247] Other *baraka*-endowed persons include figures claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (the *shurfa*) and the *ṭulba* (Qur'an reciters) (cf. Eickelman 1976).

[248] *Mawāsim* is plural of *mawsim* (or *musim* in Moroccan Arabic) which refer to annual regional festivals that combine religious celebration (often to honor a saint) with festive and commercial activities (cf. Schielke 2006).

Schielke 2008). What I am referring to here, however, is not a regular, accepted daily devotional visit to a tomb of a saint, but a form of pilgrimage that is very much contested because of the enhanced significance attached to it by those who perform it. Those who perform the Pilgrimage of the Poor consider their practice to be equal in effect and spiritual importance to a pilgrimage to Mecca as the event takes place during the Hajj season.

In the next section of this chapter, I introduce, in narrative form, the two pilgrimages of the poor: that to the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl and the pilgrimage at the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār. I discuss the spiritual, social and financial dimensions of the pilgrimage and consider how the location of the pilgrimage is not simply of religious significance but also yields important political messages which make the study of this aspect of pilgrimage worthy of greater attention. Following this, I will offer a presentation of different views or perceptions of this pilgrimage in Moroccan society.

Sīdī Shāshkāl and rituals that imitate the pilgrimage to Mecca

As was mentioned earlier, the pilgrimage to the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl took place on the ninth day of Dhū l-Ḥijja, the Day of Arafat.[249] On this day I witnessed what is known as 'the Pilgrimage of the Poor'. The rites of this pilgrimage began in the early morning and continued until the late afternoon, as people gathered in groups around the old building to commemorate the parallel pilgrimage ritual faraway near Mecca. The participants who came to the site varied in age, were both men and women and the majority of them seemed to come from the poorer communities in the villages near the western coast of Morocco, since they had used the backs of trucks as their mode of transport. There seemed to be a less prescriptive approach to the performance of the rites of the pilgrimage compared to those of the Hajj. Some people began the rites of

[249] Moroccans use Arafat (ʿArafāt) or ʿArafa interchangeably when they talk about the Day of Arafat and places related to it. In this chapter, I will use the same format which I documented during the pilgrimage of the poor which was mainly Arafa.

their pilgrimage immediately on arrival, whilst others – especially children and teenagers – ran to swim near the beach first and seemed not to have come for the shrine at all, but just to use the transport to go to the beach. Also, the amount of time spent performing these different rites varied considerably, based on the disposition of the pilgrims and their understanding of the pilgrimage. Whilst a few pilgrims circulated the shrine seven times, for example, most people seemed satisfied with one or two rounds and several people sat at a distance just observing what others were doing.

At the site I joined a group of people who were discussing their memories of pilgrimage to Sīdī Shāshkāl. Older men and women appeared to have come to this place several times in their lifetime and to have developed a strong emotional attachment to Sīdī Shāshkāl. The men spoke about their vivid memories of visiting it for pilgrimage in the past, showing the practice had become a habitual one. Many of them associated the site with good luck and *baraka*. I was told about miracles that had happened to people who visited the place in the past. For example, Osama, a man in his sixties, had come from Casablanca to relax from the noise of a large city and to enjoy the sacred site. He said:

> The first time I came here was many years ago. I was young and wanted to swim in the sea, not realizing how tricky the water can be. Once in the water, the waves were too strong and took me out further and further... I resisted but I was not strong enough against the waves. I thought I was going to die and almost gave up. That was the last thing I remember before I woke up on the shore. The waves must have carried me back. People who were nearby ran to me and helped me recover. They told me that I was saved by the *baraka* of the saint.

The people at the site agreed that Osama had been saved by the *baraka* of Sīdī Shāshkāl. Osama told them that even the money he carried in his pocket was not lost. "This must be a place blessed as God has saved it from destruction all these years," he added.

The rituals performed as part of this Pilgrimage of the Poor have great significance for the participants. Some pilgrims were convinced that

the validity of their pilgrimage matches that of the Hajj in Mecca, even if, like the Hajj in Mecca, it is performed only once in a lifetime. Other pilgrims claimed that pilgrimage to Sīdī Shāshkāl is valid for one year and that pilgrims should fast on the day of pilgrimage. A third group of people told me that if performed on three consecutive years, the pilgrimage to Sīdī Shāshkāl would equal a pilgrimage to Mecca.

I will discuss the significance of the pilgrimage further at a later point in the chapter, but first, I will give an account of the pilgrimage at the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār where a similar pilgrimage took place at the same time as that at Sīdī Shāshkāl.

Sīdī Bū Khiyār: rites of the pilgrimage

The site of the pilgrimage of Sīdī Bū Khiyār is located at the top of the isolated and eroded peak of the Adhrar n-Sīdī Bū Khiyār, the highest point in the Jbil Hmam in Ait Ouriaghel (Hart 1976, 195-6).[250] The peak is nearly 2000 meters high and difficult to reach for an outsider without a guide. Therefore, on the day of the pilgrimage, I accompanied three local men on the journey: Adil, a teacher and our driver and guide; Jawad, an enthusiastic young journalist, and uncle Abdul Razzaq, a widely respected man and father of one of the leaders of the recent *ḥirāk al-rīf*, a regional popular mass protest movement.[251] In the 1950s David Hart

[250] Ait Waryaghar (or Ait Ouriaghel) is the biggest Berber tribe of the Rif region of the north-eastern part of Morocco. Ait Waryagher means 'those who do not back off/ those who do not retreat'. They inhabit most of the territory around the city of El Hoceima. See David Hart's work (1976) which provides a substantial ethnographic analysis of Ait Waryaghar.

[251] The Rif Movement (known as *ḥirāk al-Rif* or *ḥirāk* for short) is a popular protest movement that took place in the Rif region in northern Morocco between October 2016 and June 2017 as a result of the death of Mohcine Fikri, a local fishmonger who was crushed to death in a garbage truck following the confiscation of his fish merchandise by local authorities. The mass protest movement was suppressed violently with the arrest of more than 150 Moroccans, seen by the regime as protagonists/leaders or media activists in the movement (cf. Masbah 2017; Wolf 2019).

documented his experiences here and, in my account, I will make comparisons with his record of the pilgrimage.

The climb by car from the city of El Hoceima up to Sīdī Bū Khiyār was through steep, tortuous roads, but the view over the Central Rif was magnificent. We stopped for five minutes to take some pictures of the panoramic scene before continuing our journey. Here, Adil made a note that the Berbers, or Amazigh (men of the land), as they prefer to call themselves, settled in the area thousands of years ago and at one time controlled most of the lands between Morocco and Egypt. Passing the mountains of the Rif, we saw a few mud houses around an hour after leaving El Hoceima. We had passed only one person, a young boy on a donkey. Adil lowered the car window on his side and greeted the boy enthusiastically with: "*ʿāsha l-rīf* [Long live the Rif!]."

It was close to another hour before we saw cars, vans, police and people. A policeman on the side of the road gave us a signal to stop at the end of a long line of cars. We stepped out of the air-conditioned car into the dry heat and walked past the parked cars, following dozens of people who walked in small groups towards the top of the mountain where the tomb and the shrine of Sīdī Bū Khiyār stands. It was about 9:30 AM when we arrived and large groups of people were already there to perform the pilgrimage and celebrate the Day of Arafat.[252]

As we walked up, we passed by a small rectangular structure of mud and stone, the outside wall of which was painted in white. Adil pointed at the structure and indicated that Sīdī Bū Khiyār is believed to be buried there. We, however, did not stop but walked past the site to the actual pinnacle of the Jbil Hmam at a point called Tamrabit where a

[252] In 2018, the Day of Arafat was commemorated in Mecca a day earlier than in Morocco. Saudi Arabia declared that the Day of Arafat which falls on the ninth of Dhū l-Ḥijja, would be on August 20, 2018 (making August 21 the first day of *ʿīd l-kbīr*). However, Moroccan officials declared that the first day of *ʿīd l-kbīr* would be celebrated on Wednesday, August 22. Several countries celebrated *ʿīd l-kbīr* on August 22 including – in addition to Morocco – Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and Japan. The Pilgrimage of the Poor was taking place at Morocco's Day of Arafat, the same day of *ʿīd l-kbīr* in many parts of the world, including Saudi Arabia.

female saint, Lalla Mannana, is said to be buried.[253] A man standing at the site told me that Lalla Mannana was Sīdī Bū Khiyār's lover. She is an important figure in the ritual of the pilgrimage. He added that the pilgrimage rituals include circulating, or standing near, the site of Lalla Manana on top of the hill. At the site, another man told me that the rites performed here should resemble the pilgrimage to Mecca as closely as possible. Some people circumambulated Lalla Mannana's tomb that morning while many others were satisfied just standing between the ruined walls of what used to be a room. In this respect, what I observed contrasted with David Hart's recorded observations, where he noted: "…pilgrims made the circumambulation three times around her tomb prior to the noon prayer, and then using her pinnacles as a vantage point, they even stoned the devils" (Hart 1976, 178-181). On the day I attended the pilgrimage at Sīdī Bū Khiyār, there was no stoning of devils which was, according to another pilgrim, not practiced anymore and people instead focused on making *du'ā'* prayers. Considering the tense political situation at the time, this may have also been due to the strong police surveillance.

Among those I met at the site of the pilgrimage, very little was known about Sīdī Bū Khiyār himself beyond the fact that he was a *walī ṣāliḥ,* a saint, and the site of his tomb is a place of pilgrimage.[254] As we walked down from the site of Lalla Mannana towards the tomb of Sīdī Bū Khiyār, I joined a group of pilgrims in the room where he is believed to be buried.[255] I noticed that the Moroccan flag had been hung on the door

[253] In David Hart's book (1976), he describes the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār and refers to Mannana as Aralla Yamna. Lalla is a prefix used with a woman's name as a sign of respect and it means 'lady' in Tamazight or Berber. It is used for female saints the same way Moulay or Sīdī is used for male saints.

[254] According to Hart, it is not known whether Sīdī Bū Khiyār was a *sharīf* or a *mrabit* but that he was a student of great saints, among whom was Sidi Bu Midyan al-Ghawth (1126-1198) and he probably came from Tlemcen in Algeria (Hart 1976, 194). According to Hart, the pilgrims he met believed that Sīdī Bū Khiyār had possessed great *baraka* that allowed them, among other things, to fly on the Day of Arafat from the Rif to Mecca and back, during the course of the same day; none of the people I met at the site recalled such stories.

[255] David Hart mentioned other saints in addition to Sīdī Bū Khiyār as the saints of Jbil Hmam: Sidi l-Hajj Misa'ud, and his son Sidi Hand u-Musa of the Igzinnayen

leading into the shrine. The inside was divided into three small rooms, two empty ones and the third with a tomb covered in green cloth. Behind this tomb, two men stood reading verses from the Qurʾan and saying *duʿāʾ* prayers for visitors. I stepped into the room, scarcely big enough for the two other occupants: a man and a woman carrying a baby in her arms. The woman placed her baby girl on top of the tomb explaining to the Qurʾan reciter that the child was very ill. Putting his hand on the head of the baby, the man started reciting verses from the Qurʾan and finished by saying *duʿāʾ* prayers. The woman handed over some money before carrying her daughter out of the room. I asked one of the visitors about the two men reciting the Qurʾan and prayers. He said that they were *fuqahāʾ,* religious men who had been infused with *baraka* and offered their services during the day but were not necessarily related to the late saint.[256]

Figure 46: Claimed *fuqahāʾ* at the side of Sīdī Bū Khiyār whilst reciting from the Qurʾan on a sick child (above) (El Hoceima, 21/08/2018)

(Ibid 1976, 194). However, no particular pilgrimage is made to the tomb of the other saints and it is only reserved for Sīdī Bū Khiyār.

[256] According to David Hart, Sīdī Bū Khiyār left no descendants (Hart 1976, 194).

I followed the woman with the child out and crossed to the market. Opposite us, we saw a group of men, dressed in white, sitting near the wall of what I was told was once a small mosque. Those men were the *ṭulba,* Qurʾan reciters, who, since the morning, had gathered to recite from the Qurʾan for the public. They stood in a half-circle in an open area, while hundreds of people surrounded them to hear their recitation.[257] Here, for about half an hour, they went through the litany or *dhikr*. The following is one of the poems they delivered, *sīdī Ahmad yā Muhammad:*[258]

O Master, Ahmad, Muhammad,	*Sīdī Ahmad yā Muhammad*
Allah Allah Allah Allah	*Allah Allah Allah Allah*
May God bless you, Master;	*Ṣalla Allah ʿalayka sīdī*
Allah Allah Allah Allah	*Allah Allah Allah Allah*
With you, my heart was supported,	*Yā man bika al-qalbu taʾayyad*
Allah Allah Allah Allah	*Allah Allah Allah Allah*
And it was brought up on you, Master;	*Wa tarabba ʿalayka sīdī*
Allah Allah Allah Allah	*Allah Allah Allah Allah*
Do not deprive me, O Muhammad,	*Lā tiḥrimnī yā Muhammad*
Allah Allah Allah Allah	*Allah Allah Allah Allah*
from seeing your face, Master;	*Min sanā wajhika sīdī*
Allah Allah Allah Allah	*Allah Allah Allah Allah*

Then, the *ṭulba* sat on the ground and began reciting the Qurʾan. Later, a man in a light blue *jellaba* (unlike the others who dressed in white) stood up and collected some *maʿrūf* or *ṣadaqa,* financial support from the audience. The *ṭulba* numbered around 40 men, a relatively small number when compared with the 421 men who were present at the time of David Hart's research in 1955 (cf. Hart 1976, 196). The site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār was a thriving impromptu market center, with hundreds of people shopping for *ʿīd* necessities from the numerous stalls. The following paragraph summarizes how David Hart reveals that this mercantile tradition has a considerable history:

[257] This term, *ṭulba* (sing. *ṭalib*), literally means students. In Morocco *ṭulba* refers to students of Qurʾan who are specialized in group recitation at ceremonies such as weddings and funerals (cf. Mateo Dieste 2013).
[258] I could trace the poem to Ahmad al-ʿAlawī, an Algerian Sufi Sheikh (cf. Lings 1993).

> An empty space between it and the small mosque of [Sīdī Bū Khiyār] (in a state of considerable disrepair) is called *Suq s-Salihin*, the 'Market of the Saints'; it is very aptly named, for it functions as a small but otherwise perfectly normal market on the morning of the day of the pilgrimage… (196)

As was the case in Hart's day, the market, as I saw it, was thriving and full of people who had set up stalls selling matches, candles, soap, coal, meat, fish, and fruit and vegetables, to name but a few of the items for sale.

Describing the collective prayer that took place during the pilgrimage season of 1955, David Hart writes: "The sight of this collective devotion was one I shall never forget, a magnificent example of both humility of the Aith Waryaghar before God, and of simple human dignity;" and indeed this is the view I too formed of the overarching atmosphere. To quote David Hart: the "keynotes of the annual pilgrimage to Sīdī Bū Khiyār are simplicity and orthodoxy" (Hart 1976, 189). Indeed, the rituals were unadorned, without unnecessary elaboration and so was the gathering. So, a great deal of the religious tone and core ritual remains consistent, in the practices of this pilgrimage today, with Hart's observations. The images below document the pilgrimage when it was recorded by Hart in the 1950s followed by my photographic documentation of the pilgrimage in 2018.

Given the compassion in Hart's account, it is worth mentioning here that, although generally translated as the Pilgrimage of the Poor, the Arabic phrase '*ḥajj al-miskīn*' has more nuanced significance.[259] In Arabic, *miskīn* is one who cannot make ends meet, although in appearance that might not show, nor is there begging for help. In Moroccan Arabic, *miskīn* is an engaging word, which conveys connotations of respect, empathy and even compassion towards a person in need – a tribute to the formation of the opinion about this local pilgrimage about which local pilgrims speak.

Despite the empathy that is found in the Arabic terms, the Pilgrimage of the Poor might have some historical background. From the

[259] *Miskīn* refers to being poor or unfortunate but in Morocco it also holds meanings of empathy. I was called *miskīna* on different occasions by Moroccans as a Palestinian woman.

eleventh through to the nineteenth century, some legal opinions, *fatwās,* discouraged or even prohibited the pilgrimage to Mecca for Muslims in the Islamic West (Al-Andalus, North Africa, and West Africa).[260] This distinctively Maliki discourse initially may have reflected the risks of long-distance travel from the western periphery to the central Islamic lands. Jurists produced *fatwā*s that in religious legal terms justified a regional dispensation from, or even prohibition of, the Hajj to Mecca. As a result of such prohibition, some people claimed, local citizens looked for alternatives and started performing local pilgrimages close to their communities. In other words the *miskīn* could be interpreted as an example of an unfortunate experience, i.e. having been discouraged from attempting the Hajj.

Due to its multiple functions – as a shrine, pilgrimage site, and a vibrant marketplace on the Day of Arafat – the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār, like the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl, is visited by a variety of people, including local inhabitants and visitors from nearby villages. The variety of visitors contributes also to a variety of ways of interpreting the Pilgrimage of the Poor and its performance: primarily taking place for the purpose of worshipping God, and paying respect to the saint, it also serves as a place for shopping for the upcoming *ʿīd l-kbīr* and as a space for leisure time, in order to chat, meet people or relax on the day preceding the *ʿīd*, and all this in addition to its specific political dimention (discussed later in the chapter).

[260] Some Muslim jurists working within the Maliki school of law have been discouraging or prohibiting the pilgrimage to Mecca for Andalusian and North African Muslims since at least the eleventh century. When the Almoravid ruler asked Ibn Rushd al-Jadd if *jihād* or the Hajj is more meritorious for Andalusians, Ibn Rushd protested that the answer was obvious. He stated that merits of *jihād* are innumerable, while Moroccans are all exempt from the Hajj because of their inability to perform it; furthermore, Muslims risking the dangerous journey would incur sin (Hendrickson 2016). Jurist Ibn al-Munayyir prohibited the pilgrimage for anyone who feared he might delay or mis-pray even one daily prayer on the journey. Another scholar, Aḥmad al-Burzulī's voluminous *fatwā* compilation includes more opinions discouraging the Hajj than describing its proper performance (Ibid).

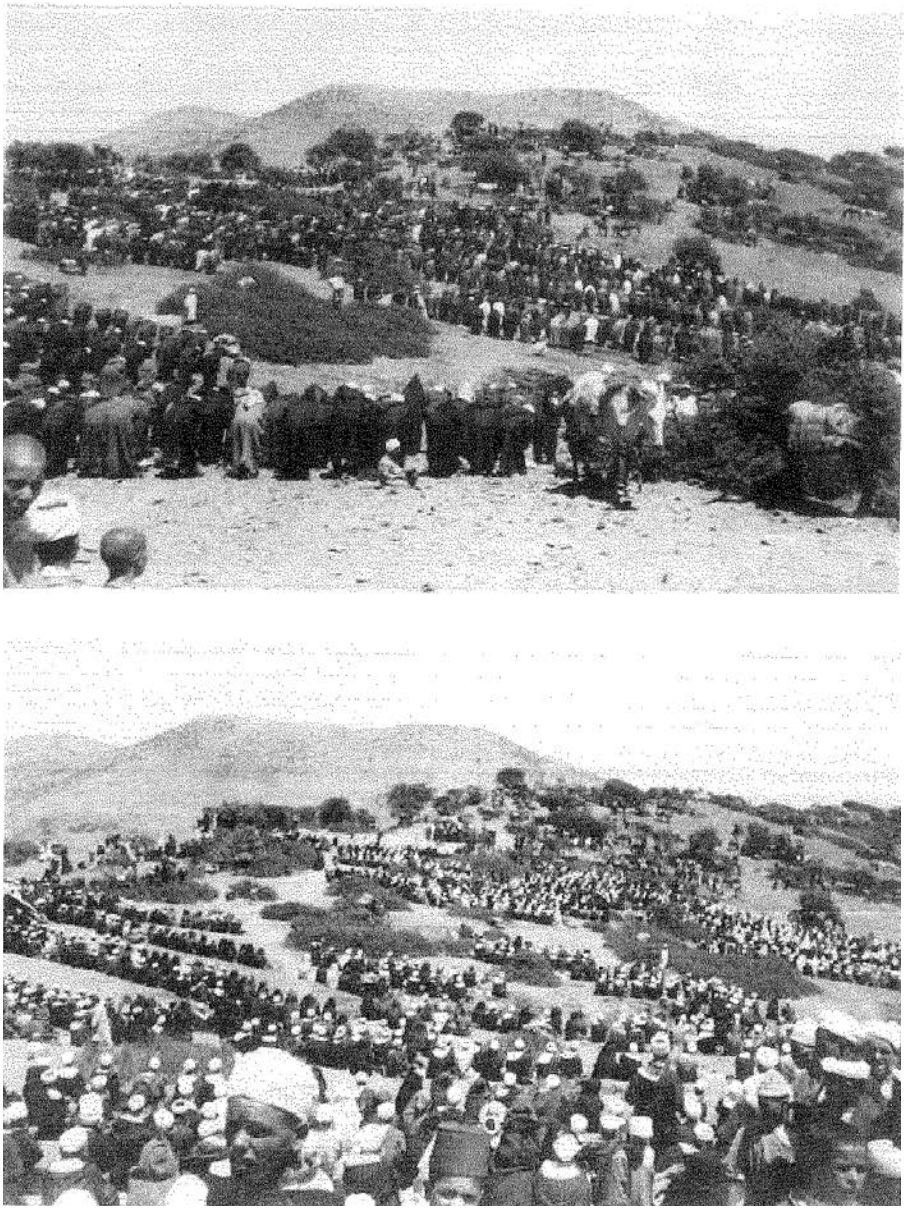


Figure 47: The site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār in 1952 (Hart 1976, 179)

Figure 48: The day of the Pilgrimage of the Poor at the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār (21/08/2018)

Explanatory narratives of participants regarding the Pilgrimage of the Poor

The dominant focus of this study is the myriad ways in which the pilgrimage to Mecca is experienced in Moroccan everyday life. However, in this particular chapter I explore the interpretation of the Pilgrimage of the Poor which is undertaken by some of those who cannot travel to Mecca for various, usually economic, reasons. I have hesitated whether to include this topic in this study but I found connections on many levels between this pilgrimage and the Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca. There were similarities and contrasts in the rites performed and, most importantly, constant interpretative references by the Moroccan pilgrims to Hajj, showing that they viewed the Pilgrimage of the Poor very much through the lens of the Hajj. Hence my decision to include it in the thesis.

To repeat what the old man whom I mentioned in the introduction said about the pilgrimage to Sīdī Shāshkāl: "This is our Hajj... Like those performing Hajj in Mount Arafat near Mecca, we have our Arafa here… May God accept it… We all worship God." The man emphasized the fact that all believers worship the same God; the location may differ but both pilgrims near Mecca and those performing the Pilgrimage of the Poor seek forgiveness and blessings from God; they make similar prayers and all pray to the same direction, the Kaʿba. His understanding seemed to be that no one should be excluded from a ritual which accesses God's spiritual benefits, such as pilgrimage.

To understand the attitude of pilgrims to these alternative pilgrimages, I was keen to uncover the historical and social processes by which the sites had been selected for veneration above other possible locations. It is believed that the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl and his mosque have existed for hundreds of years. People say, that, for a long time, no permanent community in Morocco has lived near the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl and the nearest town is half an hour's drive away. Yet, the holy site and the mosque have been preserved from natural decay until today.

Figure 49: The site of Sīdī Shāshkāl (top) and images from the Pilgrimage of the Poor (11/09/2016)

The site of Sīdī Shāshkāl is said to have been used initially during the annual pilgrimage by individual devotees, but later developed into a *moussem*: an occasion for commercial activities and community gatherings.[261] The survival of both the place and its pilgrimage is seen by those who visit it as further evidence of its sacredness. This miraculous survival is reflected in the narratives of pilgrims. For example, pointing at the strong waves splashing the large rocks on the shore, Yusri, an old man that I met in the afternoon at Sīdī Shāshkāl, told me:

> If this place had not been sacred, it would have been destroyed by the waves years ago. Look around, nothing else on the sand has survived the strong sea, but the saint has; and the huge rock that the waves hit prevents them from reaching the saint. It is a sacred site!

Yusri linked God's protection and the preservation of Sīdī Shāshkāl to the *baraka* of the saint. Significantly, he also asserted that its survival signified God's acceptance of the Pilgrimage of the Poor. For Yusri, the pilgrimage is possible only because – as it was mentioned in the Qur'an – "God bestows His grace on whom He chooses."[262] This Qur'anic reference was adopted by Yusri to convey his belief that it was God who had saved the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl. "Without God's protection, the site would have been destroyed by the power of nature," he added.

The communal belief that the site was preserved by God's means is evidenced in the ways that many other pilgrims have stories akin to Yusri's. In these stories, Moroccans from different backgrounds locate themselves within the tradition of the Pilgrimage of the Poor and communicate their narratives through patterns of storytelling. These stories create a shared discursive field in which the pilgrimage is justified by means of miraculous narratives maximizing the appeal of this pilgrimage, and, to some, the grounds for contestation.

Ahmad, another old man at the site told me that he had been coming to Sīdī Shāshkāl for pilgrimage almost yearly "for many, many

[261] In Morocco, more than 150 official festivals take place every year according to the Ministry of Information (Boum 2012, 22).
[262] See Qur'an (3, 74) and (42, 13).

years." He offered this quasi-historic explanatory narrative about the site's origins: "Shāshkāl was a religious scholar who came from the East."[263] According to Ahmad: "Sīdī Shāshkāl was a wise, knowledgeable Islamic scholar who dedicated his life to the worship of God." That is why, according to Ahmad, like many other Moroccan saints, Shāshkāl lived in an isolated area, away from civilization, to dedicate his time to fasting, prayer, and meditation; consequently, this site became a place of pilgrimage after his death. In a booklet dedicated to the Pilgrimage of the Poor near Safi, local historian Ibrahim Kridiya confirms this story, stating that Shāshkāl was regarded with immense respect and, over the years, people developed the practice of visiting his shrine on the Day of Arafat.

In Yusri's second narrative, he told the story that generations ago, in his sleep, the governor of the area saw an angel who gave permission for the poor who cannot perform the Hajj in Mecca to use the rock known as ʿArafa [or ʿArafat] as a substitute. Another person at the site said that for a place to substitute for the pilgrimage to Mecca, some soil should be brought from the land of the Ḥaramayn [Mecca and Medina] and placed at the pilgrimage site. This person, however, could not verify that this claim applied to the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl, but it reinforced the fact that pilgrims seek legitimizing narratives for those sites which are alternatives to Mecca.

The third narrative I heard came from Ali, a schoolteacher I met in Safi, who attributed the origins of the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl to the times when the pilgrimage to Mecca itself was restricted in Morocco due to the physical dangers and logistical difficulty. Those problems of travel might have dated back to the eleventh century (Hendrickson 2016, 161-8). It was believed that due to their inability to go to Mecca, people started to perform pilgrimage in public places of worship, such as the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl.

Fouad Rehouma, a Moroccan anthropologist, offers a fourth narrative. He explains in a short video about the Pilgrimage of the Poor

[263] The histories of many saints are unknown in Morocco. Most, however, are believed to have come from the East (of the Arab World) where Muslim prophets came from (cf. Eickelman 1976).

that the rituals at the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl date back to the thirteenth century.[264] Rehouma states that Sīdī Ahmad Shāshkāl used to teach local pilgrims who intended to perform the Hajj the rituals and practices required once they reached Mecca. He used his rock to symbolize the Kaʿba to train people how to perform the *ṭawāf* rite of Hajj. He also used a nearby rock to train future pilgrims on the rite of standing near Mount Arafat during the Hajj. Upon the death of Sīdī Shāshkāl, people who intended to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca continued to visit the place to practice the rites of the pilgrimage. By the seventeenth century, the place had become a popular destination for the Moroccan poor who could not afford to travel to Mecca but instead came to Sīdī Shāshkāl to circumambulate it. According to the researcher, however, at the time the intention was never to provide a substitute for the pilgrimage to Mecca as is the case among many of those who visit it nowadays.

I heard another story about Sīdī Shāshkāl from a local resident I met in the city of Safi who told me that the pilgrimage to Sīdī Shāshkāl might be related to the different kingdoms that were established in the geographical area of today's Morocco. One example is the kingdom of Barghawata which existed from the mid-eighth century to at least the mid-twelfth century; this was the kingdom of a Berber people who lived on the western coast of Morocco (cf. Pennell 2003).[265] The Barghawata Islam differed vastly from Arab Islam in ritual, although many Muslim

[264] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89Zx2Jl9PUE

[265] The Barghawatas ruled for more than three centuries (744–1058 CE). Under the successors of Salih ibn Tarif, the tribal kingdom was consolidated, and missions sent to neighboring tribes. Some writings claim that around 744 CE, Salih bin Tarif declared himself a prophet, wrote a holy book influenced by the Qur'an but in Berber, and decreed his own prayers, dietary laws and so on. His state seems to have mixed elements of Christianity, Judaism and animism on a Shiʿa base that incorporated ideas of the Mahdi and a military jihad (Pennell 2003). Yet, others claim that Barghawatas were Muslims yet due to their limited interaction with Arabs and other Muslims, they formed their own version of Islam (cf. Al-Tahiri 2005). In general, few details are known about Barghawata. Most of the historical sources largely post-date their rule and often present a contradictory and confused historical context (cf. Iskander 2007; Pennel 2003).

practices were maintained, but adjusted.[266] While I could not find any written record of pilgrimage practices among the Barghawata, my interlocutor claimed that Sīdī Shāshkāl and the Pilgrimage of the Poor to the site might have roots in the form of Islam practiced by the Barghawata and other tribes who lived in the region. Other relevant historical phenomena include the previously mentioned restrictions over the travelling from Morocco for the Hajj from the eleventh to the nineteenth centuries.

Debating the equivalence of the Pilgrimage of the Poor and the Hajj

When I visited the two sites of Sīdī Shāshkāl and Sīdī Bū Khiyār, I spoke to many visitors who insisted on the sacred nature of the site they visited and of the value of the pilgrimage which takes place there on the Day of Arafat. What struck me as an outsider were the many similarities between the rites performed at the two sites and the Hajj taking place in Mecca. At the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl, for example, the rites included circumambulating the shrine counter-clockwise, praying at the site, and standing at a place called Arafa (or Arafat). Following these rites, pilgrims wash in the ocean and, in years past, before it dried up many years ago, used to drink from a nearby well, the water which was called Zamzam. At noon, pilgrims perform the *ẓuhur* prayer together. Once all rituals are performed, most pilgrims visit the open market to shop. At Sīdī Bū Khiyār, the rites include standing at the site of Lalla Manana which is the highest peak on the mountain in addition to reciting the Qur'an and performing collective *duʿāʾ* prayers. All these practices have their counterparts in the Hajj.

However, to an outsider such as myself, the rites of the Pilgrimage of the Poor also looked unstructured and rather variable, unlike those in Mecca; it was also the case that only a few women were performing *ṭawāf*,

[266] Some practices of the people of Barghawata included fasting during the month Rajab instead of Ramadan, and performing collective prayer on Thursday rather than Friday (Pannel 2003).

one of them carrying her shoes, leaving her feet bare on the hot sand, whilst a few others were saying prayers individually on the sand floor. In other words, there seemed to be no prescribed, let alone synchronized, pattern, to the activities people undertook: the majority sat on the sand, some stood around a fortune-teller, most young people and children simply played in the sea. This is a striking contrast to much more prescriptive, almost choreographed, patterns of worship at the Hajj. Nevertheless, for some people, like the aforementioned old man, the Pilgrimage of the Poor was very much alive, and the sacredness of the place was evident in the stories he, like others who came to perform the pilgrimage, told me. Logistical problems and the necessary expenses involved make Hajj prohibitive and, while not religiously obligated to perform the Hajj in Mecca if they are unable to do so, many Muslims continue to wish to perform pilgrimage in some meaningful manner.

What counts, for those who attend the Pilgrimage of the Poor, is that it has a connection to and resonates with the Hajj. Many people whom I met at the sites of Sīdī Shāshkāl and Sīdī Bū Khiyār had their own personal rationale for participating in the pilgrimage. They look at themselves as Muslims performing a pilgrimage inspired by the pilgrimage to Mecca. Many pilgrims to Sīdī Shāshkāl, for example, told me that they were aware of the difference between their local pilgrimage and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Yet, they still hoped that God would accept their intention. According to those pilgrims, there is no pilgrimage without intention, *niyya*. One pilgrim informed me that the first intention should be recited at home and the second before approaching the site. After that, visitors take off their shoes once they approach the site, perform *ṭawāf* counter-clockwise and finish it by standing near the site known as Arafa. As I noted above, a nearby well is known as Zamzam and used to be a place where pilgrims finished their rites by drinking its water. Indications such as these show the *conscious structuring* by pilgrims of their rituals in conformity with the rites of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

In their narratives and conversations, Moroccan visitors to the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl frequently juxtaposed their local pilgrimage with that of pilgrims to Mecca. Often, pilgrims spoke passionately about local

pilgrimage, drawing out the ways this pilgrimage meets the same, or similar, religious objectives. As a man who I met on the site known as Arafa told me:

> Both those who make the pilgrimage to Mecca and those who make the pilgrimage to Sīdī Shāshkāl do it to seek God's blessings. The poor people who cannot afford to go to Mecca come here with the same motives… If people eat halal, their wishes will be fulfilled; if they eat *ḥarām*, 40 days of prayer, fasting and all won't be accepted. And so it is with this pilgrimage: people come here and wash their sins in the sea and God is the One who accepts from His worshippers. God knows what people ardently desire and He forgives their sins. Indeed, we are all pilgrims!

This pilgrim asserts the primacy of sincere motivation and conformity to broader Islamic imperatives as factors which God will judge. In a sense, he asserts the concept of equality before God, the idea that God judges people through criteria which supersede material considerations; God is understood to accept the offerings of the poor – whatever they may be – as being equally valid as those of the more fortunate ones who can visit Mecca. It is also worth noting that the Muslim Pilgrimage of the Poor tradition freed local pilgrims from the obligations and restrictions advocated by orthodox teachings.[267] The ability to equate the Pilgrimage of the Poor with making Hajj in Mecca seems to be a spiritually liberating position for the poor – a small compensation, one might argue, for their material deprivation. Thus, they enjoy the opportunity to fulfil a religious obligation, address their personal needs and feel closer to God.

The most important criterion that visitors to Sīdī Shāshkāl and Sīdī Bū Khiyār repeatedly used, as suggested earlier, for determining whether their pilgrimage was acceptable as devotional act, or *ʿibāda*, is the intention of that act, the *niyya.* The Arabic term *niyya* features prominently in texts about Islamic ritual law. *Niyya* is required in acts of worship and ritual duties including prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage (cf.

[267] There are other pilgrimages similar to that of the Pilgrimage of the Poor outside of Morocco such as the pilgrimage to the Sheikh Nur Hussein Shrine in eastern Ethiopia and Yenihan Baba in Bulgaria (cf. Zarcone 2012).

Powers 2004, 425). Among Muslims, *niyya* is consistently treated as a formal focus that transforms or translates a given act into the specific named duty. In the pilgrimage to Mecca, *niyya* is verbalized at several points starting with the *niyya* of the overall performance of the Hajj or *ʿumra* which is required when pilgrims reach one of the several approved entry sites into the precincts of Mecca and following the state of *iḥrām*. *Niyya* then is articulated as: "O God, I desire to perform the Hajj, so make my way easy and accept it from me." Similarly, those performing the local pilgrimage to Sīdī Shāshkāl claim to formulate their *niyya* to perform *ḥajj al-miskīn.* They, the pilgrims, recognize the primacy of Mecca, whilst also asserting that God – and God alone – will judge the quality of the pilgrim's prayer and intention during this alternative pilgrimage.

Those who perform the pilgrimage in Sīdī Shāshkāl view it as an opportunity to ask God to strengthen their faith. As one man told me: "We ask for a stronger *īmān*; we ask for halal food and life and we ask for a solution to misfortune and perplexity." Thus, the Pilgrimage of the Poor has a particular social function and significance, that is, to offer a means by which the socio-economically disadvantaged may feel themselves able to approach God by performing pilgrimage. Those who visit the saint's shrine perceive this practice as a devotional bridge for the disadvantaged to claim the same access to sacred space as wealthier co-citizens and use religious evidence to support their interpretation. Indeed, the pilgrims seem to have found a way to synthesize a theological interpretation of the conception of the intermediaries with their own traditions and aspirations.

It is worth mentioning here that when pilgrims perform prayers at the site, they turn their backs to the shrine and pray facing the *qibla* of the Kaʿba in Mecca. The site of the pilgrimage, therefore, is instrumental "in reaching" or "worshipping God" as pilgrims at the site would describe it. One of the pilgrims quoted a verse from the Qur'an to emphasise his point:

> True devotion is due to God alone. [As for] those who choose other protectors beside Him, saying, 'We only worship them because they bring us nearer to God,' God Himself will judge

> between them regarding their differences. God does not guide any ungrateful liar (Qur'an 39, 3).

At the moment they worship God, therefore, they turn into the real *qibla* (cf. Bonine 1990, 50-70).[268] Pilgrims, I would argue, were showing a deep awareness of the primary significance of Mecca, whilst still asserting the equality of the spiritual benefits derived from local pilgrimages.

In a similar way, according to local pilgrims at the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār, through enacting the rites of the pilgrimage in Mecca, local pilgrims hope to receive God's acceptance and blessings. At the time of Hart's research, only three men from the Jbil Hmam in the Rif area were reported to have made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1961, followed by four men in 1964 and three in 1966 (Hart 1974, 178). Although the number of pilgrims from the area who visit Mecca today has grown significantly, the pilgrimage to Mecca is still beyond reach for many people. In addition to compensating for the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Sīdī Bū Khiyār has a significant historical and political significance, hinted at above, for the people of the Rif which I will discuss in later in this chapter.

The power of a shrine, according to Eade and Sallnow, "derives in large part from its character almost as a religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices" (Eade and Sallnow 1991, 15). They assert further that pilgrimage as an institution cannot actually be understood as a universal or homogeneous phenomenon but should instead be deconstructed into historically and culturally specific instances (Ibid 1991, 3). The Pilgrimage of the Poor represents a shared heritage and is symptomatic of the materially impoverished daily lives of some groups of Moroccans. The poverty of my interlocutors at both pilgrimage sites became a unifying force among

[268] As it has been mentioned earlier, Muslims pray toward the Kaʿba in Mecca which is the sacred direction for prayer (qibla). In Morocco, however, there were slight variation in *qibla* direction in the past based on various calculations (cf. Bonine 1990). At the time of the empire of the Almohads, for example, Islamic jurists (*fuqahā*) focused on making the spiritual practice more easily carried out by the average practitioner rather than mathematically geographical accuracy of the correct direction of Mecca (Stockstill 2018, 69). Among the mosques with inaccurate *qibla* direction at the time included mosques in Marrakech, Tlemcen, Fes among others (Buresi 2018, 153).

them, part of their shared identity, and a link with the place of the pilgrimage. Possibly there is a comfort in being removed from a social context in which the poor know themselves to be judged, explicitly or implicitly, as inferior by their richer fellow citizens, as well as in making an attempt, at least, to compensate for failing to perform the much-coveted Hajj.

In addition to the unifying element of shared disadvantage, the pilgrimage to Sīdī Bū Khiyār has a political dimension which points to the multivocality of the pilgrimage (Rodman, 2003, 205). At Sīdī Bū Khiyār, pilgrims revealed how religious representations may impact on pilgrims' various modalities of belonging, first to the site and its importance and more specifically to their Riffian identity. For the pilgrims at the site of Bū Khiyār, the day of the pilgrimage was a hub for social and community gathering, with a political undercurrent that exceeded the strictly religious dimension of the pilgrimage.

In his ethnographic study of the Moroccan Rif, Hart describes the Rif as a harsh land, and the Riffians as an equally harsh and hard-minded people, and none of them more so than the Aith Waryaghar (1976, 4). Hart's words came back to me when I met a man at the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār, who told me that under the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco, independence fighters used to use the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār and surrounding mountains as hideouts and shelters. He further made a reference to the Rif Revolt (1958-59), one of the most important and least known periods of Moroccan contemporary history – where the fighters took refuge in the areas around Sīdī Bū Khiyār until they chose Muhammad Amazyan as the leader of the uprising.[269] This historical detail adds to the political importance of the site of the pilgrimage for the participants who recall, with some pride, its associations with their ancestors.

During the time we spent at Sīdī Bū Khiyār, members of the community gathered, talking about the recent social and political news in

[269] In 1958–1959, the Berber tribes in the Rif mountains revolted against the Moroccan central government. The uprisings were harshly put down with thousands of casualties (cf. Ilahiane 2006).

the region, an especially important function for those who had travelled from distant parts of the Rif for the pilgrimage. The three men whom I accompanied on this journey seemed to feel particularly close to this place where they could meet diverse members of their community, particularly so uncle Abdul Razzaq, who was greeted with great enthusiasm by both young and older people as soon as we arrived at the site. Men and women approached him to show their respect; older men hugged him, and younger ones kissed him on the forehead, a sign of respect and admiration. Numerous young people posed for selfie pictures with the older man and posted those pictures on social media immediately. Uncle Abdul Razzaq was asked about his son, a leader of the *ḥirāk* movement, now sentenced to 20 years in prison, and many made *duʿāʾ* prayers for the continued maintenance of his physical wellbeing and his release alongside other Rif prisoners. These exchanges typify the conversations at this site and extend beyond the religious and spiritual spheres.

An illustration of the political connotation emerged from comments which drew a stark contrast with Mecca in terms of the state's position vis a vis the holy sites. Unlike Mecca, the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār is neglected during the rest of the year, enjoying no material investment, so that, apart from the days of the pilgrimage, it is effectively abandoned. As interpreted by Adil and Jawad, ignoring the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār was part of the state's larger neglect of the Rif in general and its people and their culture.

The forces of the state, however, chose to be present at the site for the duration of the pilgrimage; the community gathering there took place under the eyes of the police. Unlike the pilgrimage at Sīdī Shāshkāl where no police monitored the gathering, large groups of police were present at the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār. The heavy police presence at the site was explained by the local pilgrims in two ways. The first explanation related to the nature of the pilgrimage. As I was told, in the previous year's pilgrimage, a group of religious men, as the pilgrims termed them, visited the site and tried to prevent people from performing the Pilgrimage of the Poor, decreeing that there was no substitute for the pilgrimage to Mecca.

This incident had resulted in a conflict among the pilgrims. The police were thought to be present this year to avoid similar incidents. The second explanation, and the one considered more credible by the pilgrims, was related to the political unrest in the Rif, where all communal gatherings were monitored closely by the police. On the surface of it, however, the surveillance by the police did not seem to affect the proceedings of the pilgrimage: people seemed relaxed and close to each other, enjoying meeting others and performing the rites of their pilgrimage. Apparently, the presence of the police could not tarnish this communal occasion.

The pilgrimage at Sīdī Bū Khiyār represented not only a way for participants in it to connect with the spiritual meaning of the pilgrimage in connection to Mecca but was also a way to connect with the political reality on the ground. Sīdī Bū Khiyār was a site of safety and protection. Many studies have shown the historical role of saintly shrines as sacred sites and a distinct locus where it becomes possible to reconcile social and political conflicts (El Mansour 1999, 185-98).[270] They constitute a safe place, in other words, where one enjoys the protection of the saint. At the site Sīdī Bū Khiyār, I noted several young people wearing T-shirts with the Amazigh flag bearing the letter yaz (ⵣ).[271] This sign of local Amazigh identification was noteworthy, juxtaposed as it was with the national Moroccan flag which had been put on the shrine – possibly in an attempt to placate agents of the state, in the form of the police, thereby avoiding any repercussions arising from the display of other symbols which might be seen as challenging the status quo.

Essentially, the space created during the Pilgrimage of the Poor seems to fit into Habermas' idea of the public sphere as a space separate from the formal structure of political authority and the space of households and kin (Habermas 2001, 102-103). Habermas defines the

[270] Z*āwiya*s were granted the right of sanctuary (*ḥurum*) and giving asylum to fugitives (El Mansour 1999, 185-98).

[271] The Amazigh flag is composed of blue, green, and yellow horizontal bands of the same height, and the letter yaz (ⵣ) which symbolizes the 'free man' which is the meaning of the Berber word 'Amazigh'.

public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" and in which access is guaranteed to all citizens (Ibid). Habermas neglects, however, the role of religion in the development and expansion of the public sphere (Eickelman and Salvatore 2002, 95-6).

When we sat under an oak tree to escape the heat of the sun, Adil and Jawad were busy discussing the significance of the gathering; Adil explained to the younger man: "Every Riffian who comes to Sīdī Bū Khiyār wants to connect with our sacred land." This connection, at least in its physical sense, came to a halt by mid-afternoon as people started to leave, as did we. By the evening, Adil commented: "the site will be deserted once more, until the next year, when on the Day of Arafat, the devoted, pious pilgrims will return to perform the Pilgrimage of Poor."

Competing Framings of the Pilgrimage of the Poor

Travelling to Mecca to perform the Hajj is the dream of many pilgrims who performed the alternative Pilgrimage of the Poor. In addition to fulfilling a religious obligation, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the pilgrimage to Mecca reflects various aspirations for Moroccan social life, which combine a longing for piety with wider religious and social goals. Many of those who performed the Pilgrimage of the Poor remarked on this spiritual aspect that the closeness to the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl or the site of Sīdī Bū Khiyār evoked. In so doing, they attributed to this alternative pilgrimage the same spiritual, and arguably social, value as that attached to the journey to Mecca. This attribute can be seen in the names of places such as Arafa or the well of Zamzam at the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl which served as reminders of the pilgrimage taking place in Mecca. Many pilgrims would prioritize travelling to Mecca for pilgrimage if they could, but, being financially unable to perform the Hajj in Mecca, they nevertheless expected God's forgiveness and all the associated rewards of pilgrimage.

For the pilgrims devoted to the Pilgrimage of the Poor, their identity as Muslims is inextricably linked to their understanding of their pilgrimage as a religious act, which they saw as linking them to God and

affirmed his acceptance of their actions. As social agents in everyday life situations, the pilgrims did not follow a rigid 'rational logic' of religiosity; rather, they pursued a 'practical logic' and act according to their 'feel for the game' of life (cf. Bourdieu, 1977 [1972]). In this sense, the pilgrimage provided an immediate sense of both social and religious identity for the pilgrims.

In addition to the religious dimension of the Pilgrimage of the Poor, many pilgrims actively derived a range of other advantages by visiting the sites. Many of these were unrelated to the spiritual pursuit of blessings. For instance, Moroccans from different towns and villages gathered and engaged in conversations about family matters and preparations for *ʿīd l-kbīr* in addition to discussing the importance of the pilgrimage and the rituals. Additionally, many people gathered in circles to listen to fortune tellers, ask about their future, and inquire about possibilities of finding a wife or a husband. Many people benefited from the gathering by either buying or selling necessities for *ʿīd*. The economic aspect of the pilgrimage was apparent in the plentiful vendors exhibiting their goods and entering into conversation with pilgrims.

Despite these positive interpretations and many social benefits, the Pilgrimage of the Poor is a matter of disagreement locally. Some deem it to be a sign of religious ignorance and, by definition, a ritual exclusive to the 'poor': obviously, the link made by some between poverty and ignorance is open to challenge and may simply reflect social prejudice. In the following narrative, I recount a conversation I witnessed between some friends in the city of Safi, a conversation which revealed some of the local opinions regarding the performance of this pilgrimage.

On return from Sīdī Shāshkāl on the day of the Pilgrimage of the Poor, I arrived in the city of Safi at sunset, just in time to join a local family in breaking their fast.[272] I sat in the living room with aunt Fatiha and her sister Rasmiya, her son Musa and her older brother Hassan; Fatiha

[272] It is a recommended sunna for those who are not pilgrims to fast on the Day of Arafat. According to a hadith narrated from prophet Muhammad: "Fasting on the Day of Arafat, I hope from God, expiates for the sins of the year before and the year after" (Ibn Mājah, vol. 1, book 7, hadith 1730).

brought in two types of dates on white plates and some water in a small decorated glass:

> **Fatiha** (addressing me): This is *real* Zamzam water and the dates are brought from Mecca by my brother who performed *ʿumra* in Ramadan. [jokingly:] Should I call you *al-ḥājja*, now that you performed the Pilgrimage of the Poor?
>
> **Musa** [who had accompanied me throughout the day, answered his mother's question]: Me too! You should call me *al-ḥājj* [and added jokingly] now I have performed my Hajj even before you.
>
> **Fatiha:** One day, God willing, I will go to the *real* Hajj, to visit Mecca, Medina and the Prophet… What are people doing there, at this place of Sīdī Shāshkāl? You know that Mecca is the only place for pilgrimage recognized by God.
>
> **Hassan:** It would be better for people to abandon such *bidʿa* [heretical] practices… That's not Islam. Not pilgrimage! I don't understand why people still do it, then.
>
> **Musa:** People told us they pray to God to accept their visit and make prayers similar to those of pilgrims in Mecca.
>
> **Fatiha:** I think it is all *jahl* [ignorance or illiteracy]! Those who want to do the pilgrimage should go to Mecca; it is not obligatory to do the Hajj if one is not able, anyway.
>
> **Musa:** An old man told us: "This is our Hajj; God will accept it, because we all worship God!"
>
> **Fatiha:** This is not Islam; this is *ḥarām* [taboo].

The opinions of Fatiha and Hassan illustrate the differing views on the Pilgrimage of the Poor. Their comments identify the practices of those who perform the Pilgrimage of the Poor as *ḥarām* and not Islamic. Fatiha's opinion also implies that those people who undertake this form of pilgrimage are ignorant of what she identified as "correct" religious practice, referring to them as "illiterate" and "ignorant." In their argument, Fatiha and Hassan make reference to Islam and Qurʾanic verses, using such authorities to bolster their argument and prove that the Pilgrimage of the Poor is to be avoided.

Many others among my interlocutors also condemned the Pilgrimage of the Poor and described it as being *shirk* (polytheism) *jahl*

(ignorance),[273] *tkharbīq* (foolish). This view is similar to the view towards local cults around Muslim saints in different parts of the world (cf. Schielke and Stauth 2008). Another observation during my fieldwork was that those who condemned, or looked down on the Pilgrimage of the Poor, were reflecting the social order and class distinctions in Morocco. The emphasis on "real Zamzam water," in its decorated glass, and the production of two types of dates on pristine plates, could be seen as signifiers of social status, rather than markers of religious decorum. The criticism of pilgrims using terms such as *jahl* (ignorance), *tkharbīq* (foolish) by inference, seems to signify class differences.

On several occasions I was told, mostly by middle-class Moroccans, that those who perform the Pilgrimage of the Poor are not educated and financially poor.[274] These labels in other circumstances be understood to be devoid of religious or spiritual meaning and, arguably, therefore, irrelevant to a discussion of a person's practice of their faith. On one occasion, when I presented my analysis of the Pilgrimage of the Poor at an international conference, a Moroccan university professor argued that I, as researcher, should not write about this topic, since it was, to use his words: "misrepresenting Islam." This claim of misrepresentation of Islam was also voiced by many Moroccans who advised me against writing about this topic as it might bring Islam as practised in Morocco into disrepute. Here one can see another impulse to denigrate the Pilgrimage of the Poor: nervousness about a potentially disparaging image of Islam in general and, as a consequence, there was a resultant defensiveness and desire to present the faith in the best light possible. In a strongly class-conscious society, this inevitably means

[273] There are no universal definitions and standards of literacy. However, illiteracy rates in the Moroccan national census are based on the most common definition - the ability to read and write at a specific age which estimates illiteracy rates at 32 percent of the adult population according to the latest census of 2014. Illiteracy is more common in adults over 50 years old at 61.1 percent and more common among females compared to males (High Commission for Planning 2015).

[274] With a population of 35.2 million in 2018, some 25 percent of the population (nearly 10 million Moroccans) can be considered financially poor (World Bank 2019).

associating the faith with those who occupy a more elevated rank in the social hierarchy (cf. Munson 1993).

Many Moroccans who have been to the Hajj in Mecca, as well as others of different backgrounds, shared a similar view to that of Fatiha and her family. The disapproval of the Pilgrimage of the Poor was, however, often articulated differently. Some people limited their negative analysis merely to saying: "These practices do not reflect Islam"; "God proclaimed pilgrimage only to Mecca"; and "This is *shirk* (polytheism)". Some people quoted the hadith which sanctioned journeying (*shadd al-riḥāl*) to no other mosques apart from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and the Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem.[275] However, it must be said that the permissibility of journeying to places other than the three mosques designated in this hadith was a point of contention even among theologians, not just Moroccans who opposed the Pilgrimage of the Poor. Whilst these views are rooted in a strict adherence to doctrinal precision, they still convey a negative view of the religiously motivated practices of those whose economic circumstances prevent full doctrinal adherence, as it is interpreted within the more prescriptive readings of the Qur'an and sunna.

Conclusion

In their daily lives, individuals seem to be independent from religious authorities since those authorities and particularly what they say are so far removed from their everyday concerns. Several reasons, including the geographical distance between Morocco and Saudi Arabia, poverty and their overall lack of resources may result in a large group of Moroccans suffering the disadvantage of being unable to perform the Hajj. These factors may explain why several Moroccan locations are considered to be cosmic centers that possess a degree of spiritual power that resonates

[275] In the hadith, it has been narrated that the Prophet said: "Do not set out on a journey except for three Mosques i.e. al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, the Mosque of God's Messenger (in Medina) and the al-Aqsa Mosque (Mosque of Jerusalem)" (Al-Bukhārī, book 20, hadith 2).

with that of Mecca and consequently become sites of the local pilgrimages discussed in this chapter.

I have documented that, for Moroccan Muslims, there is a complex, transformational relationship with holy sites, in the context of debates about sacred landscapes and local pilgrimage close to home. The Pilgrimage of the Poor is the practice of undertaking pilgrimage to specific places in Morocco. These pilgrimages are diverse in scale, complexity, content, design, and purpose, ranging from practices that take place at certain tombs or specified places to more sophisticated rites that imitate those that take place in and around Mecca during the Hajj. The broadening of the definition of pilgrimage offers numerous variations on the theme, allowing those less advantaged in Morocco to experience alternative strands of Islam's religious traditions.

The experience of the merging of various modalities of the Islamic tradition is summed up by the statement: "Because we all worship God," that the old man answered at Sīdī Shāshkāl when I asked him about his motivation for performing the Pilgrimage of the Poor. The quotation highlights two important issues raised by pilgrimage practice, at least in the ways in which this is articulated by the practitioners of the local pilgrimage. The first is an issue related to the religious aspect of the Pilgrimage of the Poor and the second is the fact that it reflects the multi-layered identity of the pilgrim in relation to the practised pilgrimage. The quotation can also be read as an implicit rebuke and rebuttal to those who seek to demean the alternative pilgrimages of the poor. The old man essentially asserts a belief in God's impartiality and accessibility to all his creation.

Although the validity of local pilgrimages such as those performed at the sites of Sīdī Shāshkāl and Sīdī Bū Khiyār are rejected by many Moroccans, hundreds of people continue to practice the pilgrimage to local sites in Morocco, a fact which reflects how Islam is being negotiated in daily life. It can be interpreted as a response to non-negotiable social constraints and an assertion of the value of the devotional activities of the socially marginalized. The Pilgrimage of the Poor, then, is a complex, possibly ambiguous, practice that can take

various forms and involves elements of ritual, belief, economics and, in some instances, also politics.

The question concerning the contemporary role of the Pilgrimage of the Poor, I argue, should be seen in a wider context, in which the *msakīn*, as they refer to themselves, and their pilgrimage practices, are trying to re-position themselves as devout Muslims, in a wider sense, in relation to the pilgrimage in Mecca. In their local pilgrimage, they see themselves as part of a greater *umma*, while at the same time defining themselves as Moroccan pilgrims. The Pilgrimage of the Poor in this sense is part of a much wider public debate about Islam. In effect, it reveals how different groups of Muslims negotiate their positions with respect to different interpretations of the global discursive tradition of Islam, applying these interpretations within their local context.

While the Hajj is a universal ritual, the Pilgrimage of the Poor, or pilgrimage to saints' shrines, lacks the scriptural authority and the traditions of orthodox Islam. Consequently, unlike the Hajj, the Pilgrimage of the Poor is widely disputed. Theologically, any pilgrimage site other than Mecca is rejected by the major Islamic law schools. However, for those who perform the Pilgrimage of the Poor, it offers a much-needed sense of spiritual achievement which would otherwise be denied to them. It also asserts their egalitarian representation of divinity: God who judges through scrutiny of intentions and quality of prayer, rather than by observance of established rituals only.

The pilgrims who make these local pilgrimages reconstruct their actions through a spiritual lens and assert the importance of what they do in God's eyes. They are indirectly challenging the social order which accepts that the wealthy will occupy high-rise Saudi suites, with privileged views over the Kaʿba, and at the same time questioning the views of some fellow Muslims who deem *them* to be ignorant and their practices at variance with 'normative' Islam. It seems that they seek to level out the social gradations which penalize them for their poverty.

Such alternative pilgrimages may be consolatory, enabling those who make them to cherish the hope of a better future, to be patient within

the context of social and political frustrations, and maybe to hope for the day when they can perform the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Finally, pushing my argument even further, I could imagine that the Pilgrimage of the Poor might be seen as a form of critique against the current commodification of the Hajj in Saudi Arabia, particularly its accessibility by only those who can afford it. In Chapter Six, I focused on the contestations of the Hajj management, as discussed by Moroccans. Given the absence of any such administrative oversight in the Pilgrimage of the Poor, an examination of the Pilgrimage of the Poor in the light of such criticism might provide a welcome counterpoint to the arguments put forth by its detractors.

In the next chapter, I consider cultural manifestations of the seemingly universal desire among Muslims to draw closer to God. I refer here to songs, the lyrics of which, in combination with music, permeate daily life and serve to integrate Hajj narratives more deeply into the fabric of Moroccan society.

CHAPTER NINE

Constituted Everydayness: Singing of Mecca and the Pilgrimage in Morocco

Whenever the soul of the music and singing reaches the heart, then there stirs in the heart that which it preponderates.
(Al-Ghazali)[276]

Introduction

O God, bless the Prophet;
The rider of al-burāq[277];
Muhammad, the essence of being, Ṭāhā[278]
O God, bless the Prophet;
The rider of al-burāq;
Muhammad, the essence of being, Ṭāhā

On the morning of a hot summer's day, I woke up to those lyrics, coming from somewhere outside the room where I had been asleep. It took me a while to realize that it was not a dream in which I had heard them! The voice of the female singer was mixed with other sounds from outside: cars honking, doors opening, people chatting, the sound of birds nesting on the windowsill mingled with a passing motorbike. I reached for my watch; it was 7:20 AM. This was my first full day in Fes after arriving late in the afternoon the day before. My host friends and I had talked late into the night about life in Morocco, pilgrimage and various topics including

[276] See al-Ghazali (1853, Vol. 2, Book 8, 237).
[277] Al-burāq is the name of a mule-like white beast that, according to Islamic tradition, carried the prophet Muhammed from Mecca to Jerusalem, where he ascended into heaven, and back in the night knows as *laylat al-ʾisrāʾ wal-miʿrāj* (the Nocturnal Journey and Ascension) (cf. Morris 1987).
[278] Ṭāhā consists of two Arabic letters Ṭāʾ and Hāʾ which form a unique letter combination that appears in the beginning of the 20th *sūra* (chapter) of the Qurʾan (also called Ṭā-Hā). The *sūra* begins with God addressing prophet Muhammad thus it is used as a form of address of prophet Muhammad (cf. Déclais 2005).

local languages, Moroccan Arabic, and local music. I lay back on my mattress and continued to listen as the lyrics gently unfolded, praising God, the Prophet and the beauty of creation:

> We begin with the name of the Generous,
> the Living, and the Provider;
> And embroider clothing for the listeners;
> To say, would you understand why I cry?
> For the beloved one who stole my heart and mind;
> His love tore me apart;
> I have no power but to believe!

Unable to sleep any more, I got up, searching for the source of the music. The kind breeze of the night had been replaced by dry heat. I found that the music was coming from a CD player in the living room. The girls were still sleeping on mattresses on the floor. One mattress had been folded and placed on one of the tables and the mother, Fatima, was nowhere to be seen; maybe she was on the roof, I thought.

Overwhelmed by the heat of Fes, I slid under the table reaching for the tiles in search of some coolness. From under the table I continued to listen to the lyrics as the song continued:

> He was called al-Makkī[279]…
> O God, may he be my companion on the day we meet You;
> May I never face an ordeal or see one;
> Praying in the name of the Hāshimī, the Arab Prophet[280]
> I pray in the name of Kaʿba and those who visited her

I soon learned that every morning my host mother, *khāltī* Fatima turned on some music while she finished her morning chores, opening all windows, folding the mattresses and covers used the night before, dusting and sweeping the floor. Every day I woke up to the same song, belonging to a popular genre of music known in Morocco as the

[279] Makkī literally means Meccan, meaning something or someone coming from Mecca. Makkī or al-Makkī is a common reference to the prophet Muhammad.
[280] Hāshimī is a reference to descents from the Banū Hāshim clan of Quraysh, of which Muhammad was a member. The name Hāshimī as well as al-ʿArabī (The Arab/ Arabic [one]) are common references to the prophet Muhammad.

malḥūn.[281] Other songs on the same CD included themes praising God, encouraging listeners to think about the creation, the need to remember the Prophet, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Such songs with their religious themes were favorites for my host , and they also featured as part of the repertoire at wedding parties, private gatherings, radio broadcasts, celebrations honoring the birth of a new family member, or at performances in public spaces. Today, with the advent of the Internet, many similar songs can be heard on YouTube or on social media platforms shared by Moroccans. [282]

In this chapter, I examine Moroccan songs, the lyrics of which revolve around the theme of the pilgrimage to Mecca with a frequency which reveals the importance of this experience in the lives of Moroccans. I analyze how pilgrimage-inspired lyrics in various musical forms are perceived by the listeners (cf. Hirschkind 2006). I argue that pilgrimage songs constitute a public display of piety, evoke a longing for Mecca and suggest images of the performance of the pilgrimage, for both pilgrims and non-pilgrims alike, reaffirming a bond between Moroccans and Mecca. This emotional response acts to maintain a vital connection to the religious center, Mecca, even if that center is physically inaccessible through messages of Muslim virtue and morality. Meanwhile, for those yet to perform Hajj, the lyrics act as a reminder of the pilgrimage as an ultimate religious goal.

Songs and music are part of everyday life in Morocco where people listen to them in public and private spheres in both religious and

[281] *Malḥūn* is a genre of music that developed in Morocco in the fifteenth century with origins in the Tafilalt-region in south-eastern Morocco, an area on the edge of the desert (Schuyler 2002, 799). In Morocco, *malḥūn* circulated among urban artists, craftspeople, and Sufi groups throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Jirari 1970, 562–567). By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *malḥūn* began to reflect Morocco's increased unification, and came to represent national pride (cf. Ter Laan 2016).
[282] Fieldnotes, 26/07/2019.

mundane sittings (cf. Ter Laan 2016; Kapchan 2007).[283] The interest in music of a religious nature is not confined to a specific age profile in Morocco – it is a fairly universal phenomenon. A study conducted by El-Ayadi, Rachik and Tozy (2007), based on a 2006 survey of religious values and practices among youngsters in Morocco, demonstrate the growing interest of youth in music as a form of pious entertainment.[284] The researchers show how 33.6 percent of their respondents listen regularly to music, 49 percent sometimes listen, while 17.3 percent do not listen to music at all, or do so rarely. Of this last group, only a very small minority of 3.3 percent does not listen to any music. In relation to genre preference, 14.3 percent of the respondents indicated they listen to religious music, *samaʿ* and *madīḥ*, while the rest listened to other musical genres.

In the same survey, the researchers describe this taste in religious music as a compromise between the religious and profane (El-Ayadi et al. 2007, 78). My argument, however, places the emphasis elsewhere. Compromise can suggest a concession, a lessening of principles or beliefs in order to create harmony between conflicting standpoints. However, rather than being a compromise between the religious and profane, I suggest that in the daily lives of Moroccans, the sacred and profane intertwine (to say the least), and maybe even co-constitute each other; this symbiotic relationship is manifested in the songs to which many Moroccans listen. It seems to me that my interlocutors in Morocco strive, as a general rule, to be pious in their daily lives; the expression of a longing for Mecca is one central aspect of those values or ideals that energize and motivate them day-to-day. In celebrations of significant and important life events like marriage and birth, one can see a concentration or an intensification of those ideals. Mecca, I suggest, does not metaphorically represent access to the sacred, but also a state of pure

[283] For general information on music in Morocco, see, among others, Ter Laan (2016); Witulski (2009, 2014); Kapchan (2007); Waugh (2005); Aydoun (2001); Schuyler (1985); and Crapanzano (1981).

[284] There is much debate about music and the permissibility of musical performance in Islam which is beyond the scope of this chapter. For more on those debates see, among others, Gazzah (2008) and Al-Qaradawi (1994).

bliss and abundance to the majority of Moroccan Muslims. Therefore, references to the holy city and to the Hajj in songs as I shall show in this chapter, stimulate feelings of happiness, blissfulness and joy.

To address this issue, I first discuss some reasons why music and songs are relevant to the discussion of pilgrimage in the everyday life of Moroccans. Then, I present ethnographic sketches of various settings in which the songs of the pilgrimage were heard and performed during my fieldwork, in order to show how these songs form an intrinsic part of Moroccan everyday life, in both religious and non-religious contexts. Then, I will discuss the different themes represented in the songs in relation to the pilgrimage to Mecca. I will also discuss how Moroccans celebrate their piety, sensations, longing for Mecca and religiosity when listening to these songs. Finally, I will reflect on the role of these songs as a cultural element of everyday life in Morocco.

Why songs of pilgrimage?

Music occupies an important place in everyday life and popular culture in Morocco and, indeed, throughout Muslim majority countries (Ter Laan 2016; Kapchan 2007).[285] The performance of religiously inspired music is a longstanding and diverse tradition in Morocco (Kapchan 2008; Waugh 2005; Schuyler 1985).[286] Much of the existing literature discusses the Sufi influence on religiously inspired music which has become popular in music festivals and public performances in Morocco over the last decade (cf. Maréchal and Dassetto 2014; Kapchan 2007; Schuyler 2007).[287] Throughout the year, religiously-themed festivals are

[285] See also Shannon (2015); Harnish and Rasmussen (2011); Stokes (2010); Rasmussen (2010); Nooshin (2009); Frishkopf (2008); Waugh (2005); Shiloah (1997; 1995).

[286] See also Witulski (2018; 2016); Ter Laan (2016); Kapchan (2008); Schuyler (1981).

[287] Ritual musical practices from the Sufi brotherhoods have different repertoires but generally can be divided into chants (with or without instruments) dedicated to God (*dhikr*), songs of praise dedicated to the prophet (*madīḥ*) and religious poetry (*samaʿ*) (cf. Kapchan 2007). According to the Sufi mystic al-Makki "the [singing] voice is an instrument said to carry and communicate meaningful ideas; when the listener perceives the meaning of the

organized in various Moroccan cities.[288] Moroccan music reflects the range of cultures and groups who have passed through the country, leaving behind a rich and varied legacy as is documented by both locals and foreigners (Bentahar 2010, 41-48; cf. Kapchan 2007; Lortat-Jacob 1979, 62-72).

Apart from its role in festivals, music can also be seen as a unifying marker of social, cultural and religious solidarity among listeners (Ronström 1992, 181). Ronström asserts that music is powerful because it can function as a symbol of a community or social group even if it is charged with various, sometimes contested, meanings. In his article, "The Gnawa of Oujda: Music and contending identities in the Maghreb," Tony Langlois argues:

> Music provides a medium for the expression, open or obliquely, of shared sentiments and normative values. At the same time a range of social elements compete for ownership of musical genres as potent symbolic property. Whether looking at performance or more general forms of social use, musical activity involves an interaction between the individual and the group, which in turn involves specific cultural restraints and possibilities (Langlois 1996, 203)

Therefore, it is important to look at how the lyrics and the performance setting affect the different groups of listeners in order to fully appreciate the complex role music plays (cf. Ter Laan 2016).[289] In previous chapters,

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message without being distracted by the melody, his listening (*sama'*) is lawful; otherwise, and when the content expresses physical love, simple desire and simple futilities, the listening (*sama'*) is pure diversion and must be banished (al-Makki, *Food of Hearts*, quoted in Shiloah, 1997, 149). The decline in the popularity of Sufi orders in the post-independence era affected the popularity of Sufi music. However, since the 1980s, Sufi music has regained popularity and undergone a national revival, mostly because of the reforms of Mohammed VI (cf. Ter Laan 2016).

[288] Each year the Ministry of Culture sponsors more than a dozen festivals and musical events such as the Festival of Andalusian Music, which is held in Chefchaouen, Essaouira Gnawa Festival of World Music, and Fes Festival of World Sacred Music (cf. Ter Laan 2016; Kapchan 2008).

[289] In general, my interlocutors in Morocco frequently referred to numerous musical genres to describe their own musical preferences. These musical genres include *gnawa* (originally brought to Morocco by West African slaves) which

I have discussed how the pilgrimage to Mecca itself is an occasion for celebration for Moroccans. This celebratory tradition is practised in many other countries. Examples include the Nubian tradition in which women sing call/response songs for pilgrims, accompanied by the clapping of hands (Frishkropf 2008, 492) and the songs performed among Hausa women (Cooper 1999; cf. Waterman 1990, 31). In an analogous manner, Moroccans celebrate the return of pilgrims from Mecca by singing songs. However, the songs discussed below are sung or heard well beyond the confines of celebrations for specific events. They permeate deep into the everyday lives of Moroccans, including special occasions like engagement and wedding parties and family gatherings of many varieties, as well as the routines of daily life itself, as exemplified by Fatima's early morning rituals. Thus, for example, Fatima purchased CDs of religious-themed songs which she listened to at home or in the car in addition to searching for similar songs on satellite television and radio in preference to other forms of light entertainment. Others, especially younger people, like Najat, downloaded songs from the internet or found convenient ways to listen to them – such access being a byproduct of the easy access to a wide range of facilities online (cf. El-Ayadi, Rachik and Tozy 2007; Appadurai 1996). These practices of listening to Hajj -themed

combines African Islamic religious songs, rhythms, ritual poetry, music and dancing (Jankowsky 2010); Andalusian music which has its roots in the courtly poetic and musical traditions of medieval Islamic Spain (Aydoun 2014 [1995]); *malḥūn* which consists of dialect sung poetry (Schuyler 2002, 799); *raï* which emerged in early 20th century in Algeria and uses vivid dance rhythms and a combination of electric (synthesizers) and traditional instruments (Gazzah 2008; Howe 2005); *shaʿbi* which refers to a combination of rural and urban festive folk music (Aydoun 2014, 141-142); Amazigh music also exhibits many styles, forms, and practices, both traditional and contemporary (cf. Ter Laan 2016); as well as Sufi music (cf. Kapchan 2007); *sharqī* (Middle Eastern music) (Gazzah 2008); and *anashīd* which can loosely be translated as chanting or reciting of poetry with or without instrumental accompaniment (cf. Ter Lann 2016). Variations in the style and rhythm of the same songs are sometimes to be found in different geographical regions of Morocco however, my aim here in not to focus in detail on the full spectrum of these musical forms. My interest is rather in the common or shared themes within songs drawn from different genres.

music have a self-evident and extensive presence, the reverberations of which reach far beyond the religious event which gave them origin.

In Chapter Three, I discussed how being in Mecca stimulates an emotional response from pilgrims, pilgrimage being an experience which Moroccans remember fondly following its completion. Music, it has been frequently demonstrated, is indeed capable of evoking powerful emotions (cf. Ter Laan 2016; Schuyler 2002). Songs can also be seen as part of the 'ethics of listening', which emphasizes the importance of the ear as a key site for raising a pious Muslim subject (Schulz 2006; 2003; Hirschkind 2001). I also see the songs discussed in this chapter as rich in sensory significance (cf. Meyer 2006). In a way, they can also mediate religious experiences and help listeners establish a connection to their longing for Mecca.

In the following section, I present three songs with a thematic focus on the pilgrimage to Mecca. I consider the settings in which I heard each song and I then discuss the significance of these songs, their meanings and implications for Moroccan daily life. The songs will be cited in translation, with explanatory notes and discussions of the text.[290]

Mapping out the scene: three narratives

To grasp the social significance of pilgrimage-themed songs for Moroccans requires an understanding of the specific localities and different occasions in which musical performances and reception of songs took place. Understanding these settings is part of the process of recognizing the significance of the songs and their lyrics to the listeners. In this section, I present three settings in which I listened to Hajj-themed songs: alongside this, I provide my translation of the Arabic lyrics.

Amdāḥ Maghribiya

I heard this song for the first time at a shop that sold men's clothes in the old *medina* of Fes. I went to the shop with *khāltī* Fatima who seemed

[290] My full translation of the lyrics of the songs can be found in Appendix I.

familiar with the seller as he stood up to greet her with: "Oh, *al-ḥājja*! Welcome! Welcome!" After politely asking about her health, the man reached in the drawer of his desk and took out some CDs. "I have prepared some nice songs for you" he said. He then invited her to sit on a small chair and listen as he placed one CD in an old computer to his right side and the music began:

> May God grant you peace, O prophet Muhammad
> Rise up to praise God,
> O lovers of the Messenger of God;
> This is an hour of God's,
> in which the Prophet, the Messenger of God, is present…
> O visitors of Mecca and Medina,
> Ask *ḥabīb-Allah* [the beloved of God] for intercession;[291]
> Between Mecca and Medina,
> Ask the beloved of God for intercession;
> Between Mecca and Medina there is a scent of frankincense [292]
> O Prophet, O Muhammad, O *al-ʿArabī*
> O visitors of Mecca and Medina,
> Ask the beloved of God, for his intercession;

The shop owner showed *khāltī* Fatima the list of songs on the CD whilst the song continued:

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[291] Pleading or intercession (*shafāʿa* in Arabic) of prophets is the process of seeking authority to intercede (for protection, blessing, or forgiveness) on behalf of believing members of Muslim community. There is much debate on *shafāʿa* in Islam between scholars who deny it entirely believing that only God has the power to protect people. Other, however, believe that prophets and angels have authority to intercede on behalf of Muslims. Also, Shiʿi Muslims believe that imams and other friends of God could intercede. In some Sufi traditions intercession can be realized by or through saints. In general, there is general consent that the intercession of prophet Muhammad on the Day of Resurrection is accepted by God (cf. Heck 2012). In one hadith, it has been narrated that the Prophet said: "Every Messenger is endowed with a prayer which is granted and by which he would (pray to his Lord) and it would he granted for him. I have, however, reserved my prayer for the intercession of my *umma* on the Day of Resurrection" (Muslim, book 1, hadith 400).

[292] Frankincense (*al-jawi* or *lubaan* in Arabic) is an aromatic yellow resin-grains produced by a certain genus of trees grown mainly in Somalia and South Arabia (including Yemen and Oman), and is traditionally used in perfumes, incense and as a medicine (cf. Dietrich 2012).

In my dream I saw *al-Madanī*[293]
And my mind was taken by his love;
Let's visit him; Let's visit him;
Our Prophet is a shining light…
Mecca is a bride covered with white silk;
If we are hungry,from the food of God, we will be satisfied;
If we are thirsty, from the well of Zamzam we will drink,
If we are tired, we will ride on camel;
Mecca is a bride, covered with white silk;
Pray on the Messenger, his companions were ten;
Pray a thousand times, we greet him;
God is our Lord; May You forgive us!

Two weeks later, I attended a henna party where these lyrics were played by a DJ whilst the invited guests enjoyed a meal from the rich local cuisine. At a third occasion, I heard the song in a short video of a wedding party in Fes, shared with me by a Moroccan friend via WhatsApp. In the video, a lead singer, dressed in white *jellaba* and green hat, sang parts of the song while groups of people gathered around him singing along, clapping and dancing. The highlight of the video was the section where the singer said: "O visitors of Mecca and Medina" and all the gathering dancers replied: "Ask the Prophet of God for his intercession." This form of call and response was repeated over and over again.

Figure 50: A screenshot from a video showing a singer and dancers (shared 25/03/2018)

[293] *Al-Madanī* refers to someone living in Medina; a reference to the prophet Muhammad.

Al-ḥajja [294]

I heard this song for the first time on September 15, 2016, the third day of *īd l-kbīr*. Najat invited me to her house in Temara. Her mother, grandmother, and father sat in their living room watching a musical performance on Channel 1, the national TV channel. Najat's mother brought some mint tea to enjoy following a heavy dinner. The evening music programme on Channel 1 offered a mixture of modern and traditional songs. Then, a band was shown, preparing to perform. The ensemble comprised around forty men or so dressed in traditional long, loose, hooded white *jellaba*s with full sleeves and red caps. The men played different instruments including the *kamanja* which is a violin played whilst being held vertically on the knee, the three-string traditional instrument *gimbrī*, also known as the *sintīr* or *hajhūj*, the five-stringed *oud*, and the *bindīr*, a frame drum played with the fingers. The musicians sat in three rows and in the middle of the front row was the singer. With no instrument to play, he was easily distinguishable from the rest of the men with his cream-colored *jellaba*. After a couple of minutes of unaccompanied music, the singer started to perform:

Stanza 1

We take refuge in your house...
O be generous, O Muhammad, O Ṭāhā;[295]
A sea of glory… of favor, O Messenger of God
My soul was taken away by longing for the Prophet;
Between ice and fire my heart is resilient;
My body in the land of Fes… Its situation only known by its Master;
But the soul is in Ṭayba and my brain is puzzled[296]
My pain is one that no doctor can heal
But only the Seal of the Prophets can…[297]

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[294] *Al-ḥajja* in the name of the song is a feminine reference to the pilgrimage to Mecca which is common when speaking about one pilgrimage in the singular form in Arabic.

[295] The song's title is also known with the first lyrics of it 'we take refuge in your house' (*zāwagnā fi-ḥimāk*).

[296] Ṭayba is one of the names of Medina.

[297] *Tāj al-mursalīn* or 'Seal of the Prophets' is a metaphorical term used to mean the last prophet or the final prophet. It is used to designate prophet Muhammad (cf. Aḥmad 2011).

O birds in the sky; I ask you by the *sulka* and those who read it[298]
Lend me your wings to reach the Prophet and see him…

At this point, Najat's father, *al-ḥājj* Abdullah turned to me to introduce the song. I learned that the song was originally a poem composed by Abdel Hadi Bennani, a spice merchant from Fes, whose lyrics are celebrated in Morocco even today although the song might be a hundred years old.[299] He informed me that the lyrics were deeply moving, especially given the style in which it is played, *malḥūn*, and the language itself was very rich in metaphors. He invited us to listen carefully as the song continued:

Stanza 3[300]

Who knows I may see you in my dream while people are asleep,
And greet you… O Master of those who transcend;
My fragmentation will be gathered by you...
And my thirst will be quenched…
When we come to you, we will show off
We come to Mecca, the place of beauty, glory, and dignity
In Rabigh we enter the state of *iḥrām,*
in the way directed by our messenger, Ṭāha[301]
We will recite *talbiya* and perform *ṭawāf*,
like previous worshippers of God
We kiss the stone of happiness; and our wishes will be complete[302]
And we will be full from the water of Zamzam that we miss;
Between the Ṣafā and the Marwā, my soul will remain there;
We will plead to the Listener of prayers when our aim is complete

Stanza 4

We will go to the pleasant Mount Arafat and win protection;
To reach a high degree... In the light and darkness;
Immediately we become known as *al-ḥājj*
And our wishes become complete;

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[298] *Sulka* is an Amazigh expression that refers to group gatherings that aim at collective reciting of the Qur'an and making *duʿā'* prayers.
[299] Abdel Hadi Bennani is a poet from Fes who died in 1925 (cf. Danielson, Reynolds, and Marcus 2001).
[300] I skipped stanza 2 for structural purposes; yet it is available in Appendix I where I provide a full translation of the song.
[301] Rabigh is a town northwest of Mecca near which pilgrims can enter the state of *iḥrām*.
[302] The 'stone of happiness' refers to the black stone at the Kaʿba.

When the sun sets into the water,
We walk to Minā each of us is pleased…
In Minā we spend three pleasant and beautiful days ;
We all leave together... And our performance is complete
We will gain the secrets, and our wishes at the final stage
We will come to Medina, visit the honorable Messenger of God
All goodness is in Medina; those who see its beauty gain happiness
In it is the place of the Seal of the Prophets who came for us.

Stanza 5

I want to be a neighbor in Medina; she is full of light…
In Medina, we will be happy; we rest and heal
In Medina, there is *Ṭāhā*, the lover who visited heavens
O Messenger of God, look how my soul is drowning with sins
O Messenger of God, save the believer from his enemies
O beloved of God, my body is full sickness
O Messenger of God, be generous and heal my body and its parts
O Messenger of God, your wonders have no end
O Messenger of God, the writer of this poem dedicates it to you

Figure 51: Screenshot from a traditional music performance podcasted on Channel 1 (watched in Temara, 15/09/2016)

When the song finished, Najat stated that her father liked this style of poetic song and the *malḥūn* musical genre. Later, she played me a new cover of the song, performed by a young popular singer called Sanaa

Mrahti.[303] On her phone, she looked up the song on YouTube and shared it with me.

When I asked *al-ḥājj* Abdullah about the music, he explained the importance of the song for himself. He stated that when he was young, *malḥūn* music was very popular as a Moroccan musical style. Specifically, he explained that this song was significant to him as it reminded him of the pilgrimage to Mecca. *Al-ḥājj* Abdullah offered this interpretation of the lyrics:

> Any pilgrim… even any Muslim can relate to the lyrics… When the poet says his body is in Fes but his soul is actually in *Medina* where the Prophet is… He longs to be next to the Prophet and visit him… May God never prevent anyone from [accessing] those Holy Places!... Being near the Prophet means the person would be healed from any sickness… That's why the poet wishes he can fly and reach the Prophet…

It is worth mentioning here that in many versions of the song, the mention of Fes was omitted, and the name of the city was replaced with "My body is *among the people*, and its situation is only known by its Master." This change in the lyrics, according *al-ḥājj* Abdullah: "was made so that the listeners, wherever they were in Morocco, could relate to the song and the expression of longing [in it]."

Allah Yā Mawlānā

This encounter took place at the party of Najat's cousin, Asma. Asma had become a mother to a baby boy and invited us to attend a celebration of the occasion for family and friends. We arrived in the early afternoon in the neighborhood where Asma lived. On the street, alongside Asma's house, a big white marquee had been put up by a caterer who also provided food and drinks. Later that day, Najat told me, the men of the family and their male friends would have their celebration at the same place but later in the evening. The men's gathering would be accompanied by *ṭulba*, reciters of the Qurʾan, and *munshidīn*, singers who

[303] Sanaa Mrahti is a popular Moroccan *malḥūn* singer. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPClx344CqI

would perform religiously themed songs. For the women, however, the music was performed by a male DJ who was stationed outside the tent. The tent was almost full of women and girls of different ages, taking their place at the decorated tables. At the back of the tent two large speakers were placed to amplify the songs that were played. Najat, who sat next to me at a table that accommodated eight women, assured me that the songs played by the DJ would be similar to those performed live by the band members who would arrive later for the men's celebration, "Maybe with the exception of the more *shaʿbī,* popular songs [in the women's] celebration", she added.

The songs varied in their themes: a song of praise of God was followed by a song about the Prophet and these filled the time until Asma entered the tent carrying her new-born baby. Asma was welcomed with the popular prayer in Moroccan Arabic: *Ṣalāt wa-salām ʿla rasūl Allah; lā jāh ila jāh sayidnā Muhammad; Allah maʿāhu al-jāh al-ʿalī* which I translate as: "Prayer and peace be with the messenger of God. There is no glory but the glory of our prophet Muhammad; God, with him is the highest glory." After the women had collectively recited this chanting they ululated and applauded. Asma greeted the guests and welcomed them. Then she was led to the middle of the tent where she joined in dancing. Among the songs played was the iconic song of Nass El Ghiwane, *Allah yā Mawlānā*:

Allah yā Mawlānā [God, O, our Master]
Allah, Allah, *Allah Mawlānā*
Allah yā Mawlānā
My condition is not hidden from You,
O, *al-Wāḥid*, my Lord![304]
Praises to the Living, the Infinite[305]
Praises to You, O God be generous to me
Thanks to You my rivers are full of water
and in Your flowers, my bees are foraging

[304] *Al-Wāḥid* is one of the 99 names of God in Islam and means One or Absolute One (cf. Reynolds 2020).
[305] The Living (al-Ḥayy) and the Infinite (al-Bāqi) are among the 99 names of God in Islam.

The Prophet, oh my neighbors,
If I have enough food, I will walk to him tomorrow
I will see the light of my eyes
Visit the Kaʿba, circulate it and recite *talbiya*
…..
People have visited Muhammad;
Allah, Allah, Allah,
I housed [him] in my heart
Allah, Allah, Allah,
The people visited him by conveyance
Allah, Allah, Allah,
I went to him on foot;
The Prophet, the Arab Messenger
Allah, Allah, Allah,
Ask the angels, ask the soul!
Allah, Allah, Allah,
Ask the angels carrying the throne!
Allah, Allah, Allah,
Ask the guardians of the inscriptions[306]
Allah, Allah, Allah,
My heart is attached to the Qurashī[307]
Allah, Allah, Allah,
Who would blame me?
Allah, Allah, Allah,
I will sell to those who would buy what I have;
Allah, Allah, Allah,
I will sell as a needy person would,
Allah, Allah, Allah,
Those who tried would understand me.

Following the song, the women were invited to take their seats as food was being served. Songs continued to be played as women enjoyed the food and chatted about various subjects.

[306] Referring to the angels guarding the Qur'an.
[307] Qurashī (belonging to Quraysh tribe which was a noble tribe in Mecca around the time of the birth of the Prophet and to which he belonged); in the text, it is used as one of the nicknames of the Prophet.

Thus, it became quickly apparent to me that songs with devotional lyrics, cast in a number of genres and appealing to a wide age-range, were a staple element of the cultural and social gatherings of Morocco. The songs I have highlighted above were mediated in a wide range of contexts: background household music; as a gift to exchange with a friend; at a henna party; as part of a birth celebration and on TV or YouTube - diverse settings, varied listenership but all united by a thematic harmony. I will now offer interpretative comments on the songs.

Pilgrimage songs as expressions of longing for the Prophet, Mecca, and the Hajj

It is self-evident that the themes of the songs described in this chapter share some characteristics (over and above discussing the pilgrimage to Mecca), including the praise of God and of the Prophet. In many ways, these songs do not differ much from songs praising God or the prophet Muhammad which are common in many other Muslim societies and in Sufi chanting (cf. Ernst 1997, 186-188).

The first song, *amdāḥ maghribiya*, as its name indicates, belongs to the genre of *amdāḥ,* plural for *madīḥ*, which is also known as *madīḥ nabawī* in reference to the prophet Muhammad, as it is often devoted to eulogizing or praising the Prophet and his family.[308] *Khāltī* Fatima expressed her admiration of the song as a motivator that reminded her of the Prophet, and of Mecca and Medina. In her words:

> What better song is there than one that praises the Prophet?... As the song says he is the one beloved by God… Also… The song speaks of Mecca and Medina and asks for *shafāʿa* [intercession]… May we be granted that *shafāʿa*!

[308] *Madīḥ* poetry is similar to the genre of *samaʿ*, attentive and active listening, which is derived from traditional Sufi chanting practices (Waugh 2005). *Samaʿ* is used as a method of spiritual discipline in Sufi doctrine than leads to the development of what may be called "higher senses and emotions" (Becker 2004, 29). While *madīḥ* is associated with the praise of the Prophet, *samaʿ* is based on poems of the Sufi shaykhs.[308] Popular Sufi shaykhs in Morocco include al-Imam al-Harraq, Ibn al-Farid, Abu al-Hassan al-Shustari, Abd al-Ghani an-Nabulsy, Ibn al-Arabi (cf. Waugh 2005).

Khāltī Fatima pointed out that listening to the song made her feel closer to Mecca and Medina, remembering the times when she performed Hajj and *ʿumra,* and so which made her feel closer to God. When I heard this song at an engagement party together with *khāltī* Fatima, a cousin who sat at our table, she commented: "I can recall my pilgrimage when I hear this song; the *ṭawāf*, the Kaʿba, the Rawḍa … Oh how much I long for those places!" For both women listening to the song the experience produced a vital connection to the sacred space of Mecca, even if the city was physically far away. The physical distance to the sacred heart of Muslim geography can thus be overcome by local musical practice.

Moreover, listening to this song was also seen by both women as a valuable religious act in and of itself. Following the reading of the Qurʾan and praying, which can earn one religious reward or *ajr*, listening to these songs can be held to be important in developing personal ethics and encouraging listeners to perform religious acts. For instance, *khāltī* Fatima commented in response to her cousin's words: "I will go on *ʿumra* this year, *in-shāʾ-Allāh*, and see those places again." In addition, the song finished with a final prayer asking for God's mercy: "O, God, our Master; have mercy on us."[309] Asking for God's mercy was a popular theme within prayer that I frequently heard in Morocco. In a sense, this longing for mercy relates strongly to the Hajj, a pilgrimage act which offers forgiveness of sins and the opportunity to begin afresh, with a tabula rasa, as it were. Therefore, the longing expressed in the songs for mercy and forgiveness carries with it this implicit longing for the blessing of the Hajj.

The personal feelings of piety and longing that the songs evoke are often shared with others in the social networks to which one belongs. *Khāltī* Fatima, for example, bought three copies of the CD containing the song. When I asked her what she needed the three copies for, she told me that one was for her to play in the house of Fes, another to give to her daughter for the latter's house, and a third to leave in her daughter's car so she could listen to it while driving. In this sense, *khāltī* Fatima was not

[309] *Madīḥ* songs often end with a prayer like 'O God, have mercy on us!'.

only sharing a style of music that she preferred, but also a sense of her own personal religious and spiritual experience.

Najat, her father, and Asma also expressed a sense of longing for Mecca when they heard the previously mentioned songs. The individual consumption of these songs seemed to have both a highly personal impact, but also the devotees were often happy to share the song with others. The implication was that the act of sharing Hajj songs goes beyond one's personal experience and reaches out into the family and wider community. In the following section, I will attempt to illustrate the mechanism by which this process occurs.

Striving for piety

When I asked Moroccans about the songs of pilgrimage to which we listened, frequently their answer was that they did not think much about the meaning. Instead, those songs were so frequently heard that they seemed to be normalized for the listeners, who did not reflect on them. Yet, as I discussed the themes of the songs further with my interlocutors, I found that the very act of listening to those songs was sometimes seen by those listeners as a form of religious practice. In the eyes of Abdullah, for example, the second song, *al-Ḥajja*, is a "reminder of the importance of holy sites and therefore a reminder of [a Muslim's] religious duties including the pilgrimage to Mecca." I heard similar opinions from Lubna and *khāltī* Fatima when I discussed the lyrics of *Amdāḥ maghribiya*. It seemed to me that listening to the song was a performative practice that created pious dispositions in the listening audience (Hirschkind 2006). Both songs seemed to remind the listeners of pious behavior and simultaneously promoted ideal images of the pilgrimage and of Mecca.

In a manner somewhat similar to the Egyptians in the piety movement that Charles Hirschkind studied, many of the listeners to the three songs with whom I spoke claimed that they moved them to cultivate a spiritual self and community with others (cf. Hirschkind 2006; Shannon 2015). Unlike those in the piety movement, however, the audiences in Fes and Temara did not limit themselves doctrinally but

were encouraged to listen as a way to bridge and even transcend ideologies. This is a particularly important point, as it illustrates the broader significance of sacred songs in Morocco: they are indeed devotional opportunities for listeners, but also part of the everyday social fabric of shared values which supersede narrow doctrinal boundaries. This process is facilitated by the Internet which has enlarged the possibilities of buying and downloading music and gives people the opportunity to search for very particular songs that they would like to hear and share, outside religiously delineated demarcations of sect.

Furthermore, for *al-ḥājj* Abdullah, expressing love and longing towards the Prophet was essentially part of the love a Muslim expresses towards God. This was also the case for *al-ḥājj* Omar, a pilgrim, whom I met in Safi who once told me: "The path to the love of God is bound with the love of His Messenger." The traditional motif of awe for the Prophet is apparent in Moroccan religious and cultural traditions beyond music. Moroccan Sufi traditions, for example, use blessings upon the prophet as part of the practice of remembrance of God, often performed after prayers. In one of the *dhikr* sessions which I attended following prayers in a mosque in Ouezzane, men collectively chanted a section of al-Jazuli's *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt*. The blessings include the following section, for instance:

> O God, bless the one whom the stones greeted;
> O God, bless the one before whom the trees prostrated themselves;
> O God, bless the one from whose light the flowers were produced;
> O God, bless the one by whose *baraka* the fruits are good;
> O God, bless the one from the remainder of whose ablution the trees were made green;
> O God, bless the one from whose light all lights overflowed;

These blessings include a strand of imagery that draws on the beauties of the natural world to connote divine significance. This tradition continues in Morocco today as a large group of artists and performers practice a variety of sonic expressions including not only *madīḥ*, but also *malḥūn* and pop songs about the love of the Prophet. In their prayers and even daily conversations, I heard Moroccans refer to the Prophet with various

names such as *ḥabīb-Allah* (the beloved of God), *sīdī rasūl-Allah* (my master Messenger of God) which were also featured in songs.

The fondness for the Prophet in both the *song al-Ḥajja and Amdāḥ maghribiya* was further expressed in wishing to see the Prophet in one's dreams. When discussing this theme with *al-ḥājj* Abdullah, he quoted a hadith, according to which the Prophet is believed to have said: "He who sees me in a dream has seen me, for the Devil does not appear in my form" (cf. Al-Bukhārī, book 91, hadith 16).[310] To see the Prophet in a dream or a vision, an intimate quasi-visual encounter with the messenger of God in Islam, is therefore seen as a good omen. The longing to see the Prophet (whether that is by seeing him in a dream or visiting his mosque and tomb in Medina), therefore, is an ultimate wish for many people, including *al-ḥājj* Abdullah's mother who joined our conversation by commenting: "…and who would not want to visit the Prophet?" Her comment was rather a rhetorical statement based on a certainty shared by her interlocutors, that everyone would choose to see the Prophet if they were able to do so.

Fondness for Mecca and Medina, in addition to the awe experienced while visiting them, is expressed in many ways in the songs. For example, *al-Ḥajja* song describes Mecca as 'the beautiful one who won greatness and glory', personifying the city, then explains how pilgrims start their *iḥrām* at Rabigh, perform the *talbiya* and the *ṭawāf,* similar to other worshippers of God. Medina is also personified in expressions such as "she is full of light" and other evocative images of positivity. This device elevates the status of the places beyond mere geography.

Al-ḥajja song is densely packed with a series of images, not necessarily connected except by means of their associative power to suggest and convey the attitudes, emotions and experience of awe through which pilgrims pass, and which they seek to recreate in song. Thus, we find the metaphor of illness, with the Prophet offering a cure; separation being countered by the wholeness offered to pilgrims; a sense

[310] (cf. Hoffman-Ladd 1992).

of drowning followed by being saved, of profound thirst being quenched. All these images are metaphorical expressions of the salvation and hope offered to pilgrims through Hajj. Kissing "the stone of happiness" captures the love and longing to pay spiritual tribute at the Kaʿba. When such a densely woven set of images is conveyed through the vehicle of effective music, which itself has the power to stir emotions, the effect is intensified.

The language used in *al-Ḥajja* song, offers a series of opposites: striving to travel and to accomplish the pilgrimage, followed by the satisfaction of accomplishment; expressions of illness and pain caused by the distance from the holy sites, followed by healing; thirst followed by being quenched with Zamzam water; religious ambition and longing, followed by achievement. It seems as if these linguistic patterns reflect and reinforce people's established attitudes to the Hajj and may additionally also help to reinforce their position and view of pilgrimage.

Collectively, the songs also express religious sentiments particularly relevant to the importance of pilgrimage. The *al-Ḥajja* song, for example, according to *Al-ḥājj* Abdullah, described how the ultimate wish of the pilgrims is fulfilled once they complete the performance of the Hajj, as the lyrics state: "I would then be called '*al-ḥājj*' and my wishes would be complete." Whilst the title may not itself offer a sense of accomplishment, it appears that the experiences which preceded the acquisition of this honorific name imbue it with significance: the title signifies a journey completed and as such the linguistic badge is prized. Interestingly, *al-ḥājj* Abdullah's wife, who joined our conversation, agreed, although she had not been to Mecca. She was perhaps affected by the powerful impact of messages of a religious nature being conveyed in a metaphorically laden song, alongside the importance of the title '*al-ḥājj*'. For the wife, the impact of the song reaches also those who have not been able to perform Hajj, as well as on those who have been to Mecca and Medina.

The first two songs, *Amdāḥ maghribiya* and *al-Ḥajja,* are of a somewhat different nature from *Allah yā Mawlānā,* a song that is popular in Morocco and beyond. *Allah yā Mawlānā* is a well-known Moroccan folk

song, which has been reinterpreted by the famous Moroccan band Nass El Ghiwane (Bentahar 2010). Since its formation in 1971 this group of four working-class young men from Casablanca, Nass El Ghiwane have produced not only songs that championed social justice during the 1970s, but also revived traditional Moroccan lyrics (Fernández Parrilla and Islán Fernández 2009, 152). The group composed their songs in *dārīja* and gained popularity with audiences across Morocco (cf. Schaefer 2012). Politically, Nass El Ghiwane voiced the socio-political and economic concerns of average Moroccans in addition to cultural and religious themes (Aadnani 2006, 25).[311] The themes of their songs range from love songs, to revolutionary songs criticizing corruption, and to others that encourage a pious life including performing the pilgrimage to Mecca: a diverse thematic repertoire.

In many ways, Nass El Ghiwane perform music that voices issues related to Moroccan everyday life. The band became one of the most successful groups in Morocco, using the thematic content mentioned above as well as traditional songs by mystic poets (Schuyler 2007). Nass El Ghiwane's music remains popular in Morocco not only because of their lyrics and use of *dārīja*, but because their music is diverse in style and content (Aadnani 2006, 25).

Figure 52: Screenshot of a live performance of Nass El Ghiwane[312]

[311] The group plays a motley assortment of traditional instruments in untraditional combinations including the *sentir*, a gut-stringed bass lute; banjo; kettle-drums, frame drums, tambourines, and cymbals.
[312] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IldgLyEdr0k

The popularity of the song *Allah yā Mawlānā*, according to Najat, is due to several factors, including the live performance, the rhythmic, 'catchy' music and its theme. Moroccans told me that the song itself has older roots than its performance by Nass El Ghiwane; yet none of those people could tell who sang it first. What is more relevant here is that *Allah yā Mawlānā* and other songs of Nass El Ghiwane became part of the local popular culture. In Najat's words:

> We listen to these songs in weddings and celebrations… We also can relate to the lyrics… I specifically like *Allah yā Mawlānā* although I also like other songs of Nass El Ghiwane; they were such a phenomenon…

Figure 53: The music group Nass El Ghiwane on one of their early LP early album covers

Figure 54: Posters advertising concerts of Nass El Ghiwane in the Dutch cities of Haarlem and the Hague (2018)[313]

The performance of pilgrimage songs at seemingly non-religious celebrations and weddings was deemed appropriate by the organizers, who wished thereby to create a certain ambience and effect on the listeners, possibly elevating the significance of the occasion by association with pious subject matter. The subject matter was not intended to have a sobering effect, nor to quash high-spirited joy at the celebration, but rather to add another dimension. Such is the centrality of Hajj to their life journey for many Moroccans that there is no separation or segregation between seemingly profane songs of celebration and religious ones; they may occupy different places on the musical spectrum but are relevant for all occasions. Thus, it was interesting to see that at an event such as the celebration of a birth, the pure joy at new life can be celebrated by evoking the spirit of pilgrimage. Asma, for example, told me that songs like *Allah yā Mawlānā* and similar ones played at the celebration were emblematic of the desire to protect

[313] Nass El Ghiwane are still very popular not only in Morocco but also among second and third generation descendants of Moroccans in Europe.

the new child, to ward off the evil eye by reminding the guests of the Prophet, Mecca, and the pilgrimage and thus evoke some of their *baraka* and protective power.

In many of these celebrations, men and women participated separately in the festivities. Yet the integration of religiously inspired music with more popular, profane lyrics in both settings is similar. At Samiya's cousins' party, for example, the women's celebration took place in the afternoon while that of the men was planned for the evening accompanied by a live performance of a group that offered Qurʾanic recitation followed by religiously themed songs. These groups perform instead of the customary *shaʿbi* bands and therefore bring religious themes into everyday occasions and public celebrations (Tammam and Haenni 2004).

Arguably, the interweaving of pilgrimage-themed songs into everyday settings might transfer religious discipline from the exclusive sphere of the spiritual and emphasize a central Islamic concept: that being Muslim must be actively lived out in every aspect of existence. It is not a habit to be adopted in some contexts and later discarded; it can 'legitimize' mundane activities with a 'religious' air. Thus, in a way, such songs offer the listeners constant reminders of the central truths and core practices of their religion. In the next section, I further reflect on this topic, bringing together examples from the songs previously mentioned and others that I heard during the course of my fieldwork in Morocco.

The sacred and the profane: the ethical dimension of religious songs used in contexts outside the devotional

In my research, I witnessed the seamless integration of devotional songs, related especially to Hajj, into the daily life and celebrations of Moroccan people, thus blurring the boundaries between the religious and the non-religious, or "the sacred and the profane" to quote Durkheim. For example, my interlocutors listened to Hajj -themed songs or played them in their houses because they wanted to enjoy the music but wished to do so in a manner that they considered proper and modest. For many people, these songs are popular exactly because they demonstrate aspects of a

morality and spiritual discipline which adherents wish to use as demarcations of a life well-lived. According *al-ḥājj* Abdullah:

> Mentioning the pilgrimage, in a regular conversation or in a song, makes one remember his sins... That the pilgrimage is an opportunity for forgiveness of those sins […] and also a reminder of the Day of Judgment and… of how a Muslim should get ready to that day through performing good deeds and staying faithful…

Spiritual cleansing and forgiveness of sins are predominant themes in pilgrimage songs. When pilgrims are purified of their sins, they can continue their lives happily. They can also face death as they would be ready to meet their creator as "no more earthly desire would distract them and they will wait for departure" referring to death as *Allah yā Mawlānā* indicated.

Charles Hirschkind (2006) argues that, through the power of Islamic cassette sermons, new sensibilities and affective states can be created via ethical listening practices (2006, 25). I would contend that a similar argument can be made about the power of the Hajj-themed songs to evoke religious feelings among listeners. However, unlike the sermons that were not intended as entertainment, Hajj-themed songs were used as a form of entertainment in many settings, especially in public gatherings like weddings and parties. The songs acquired a dual function and effect: pleasurable and devotional at the same time. The lyrics of those songs express a rich combination of daily references and experiences, together with aspirations for escape, that is, to Mecca. Indeed, the songs have power that blends the two realms of experience. The songs' themes suggest that reference to the Hajj is omnipresent and relevant to all of life's events, from the most trivial to the most significant, from breakfast background music, and in-car entertainment to the most serious of life's rituals: birth, death and marriage. The themes of these songs seemed to weave life's discrete events together.

Indeed, it can be argued that the categorisation of some events in Moroccan life as profane can be questioned. Even at a linguistic level, the intimate interweaving of the profane (seen in the imagery of physical

needs, of light, of the natural world) with the religious, indicates the blending of the two realms of experience. People draw on images which are known, felt and experienced in reality to capture something of the majesty of the divine. In a reciprocal manner, the divine becomes immanent in life's daily cycle and we see a mutually reinforcing relationship between the religious and the daily temporal realms.

Songs are also a communication tool to inform and express religiosity to and among people because of their capacity to influence the listeners through stimulating their emotions (cf. de Witte 2011; Meyer 2009; Hirschkind 2006). Not only do these songs, as expressed by *al-ḥājj* Abdullah, evoke religious commitment, but they also evoke joy and happiness, as well as the emotional reward of a spiritual life. By attaching such values and aspirations to life's celebratory moments, such as birth and marriage, something of those elevated spiritual attributes are transferred to the person whose life is being celebrated, intensifying the occasion by adding an additional spiritual dimension.

In addition to feelings of longing, the pilgrimage itself is described as a subject of amazement and astonishment. In one version of *al-Ḥajja* song, performed by the popular singer Muhammad Bouzubaʿ, he adds:

> *Hawlūnī* (they astonished me);
> They astonished me when they visited the prophet Muhammad
> They astonished me when they visited the Kaʿba
> They astonished me when they drank the water of Zamzam
> They astonished me when they stood at Arafat

It is important here to distinguish the emotions felt by the singer (and originally by the composer) and the response the song evokes in the listeners. In the songs themselves, there is a clear reference to elevated and intense emotions and their fulfilment achieved by visiting Mecca, which is seen as equivalent to visiting the Prophet. In *Amdāḥ maghribiya,* for example, emotions of longing were expressed and the promise that bodily needs were met when a person performed the pilgrimage. The lyrics asserted that the most basic of human needs, such as food and water, which could be seen as the essentials of life, could be easily satisfied once in Mecca as the song declares: "If we are hungry, from the

food of God we will be satisfied" and "If we are thirsty, from the well of Zamzam we will drink." As well as suggesting that all physical desires are sated and become insignificant in the presence of God, these lines could also be metaphors for a spiritual hunger and thirst, satisfied by completion of the pilgrimage and feeling blessed in general. The emotions are further evoked through the repetition of the line "*Allah, Allah, Allah*" over and over again which echoes the practice of *sama'* or Sufi chanting (cf. Kapchan 2007).

For the listeners, the songs induced an effect in them which was often manifested in bodily reactions such as tears, smiles and sighs. When listening to these songs, listeners are active agents who respond to the song with direct sensory expression. Addressing the senses, feelings and the religious imagination at the same time, pilgrimage songs can mediate religious experiences, as already stated by *al-ḥājj* Abdullah, *khāltī* Fatima and Najat who, in different ways, expressed how these songs helped establish a connection to the holy places, the pilgrimage, God and the Prophet. The power of these songs, therefore, was reflected in terms of the senses, sentiments, and emotions evoked by the religious themes. The writers/singers seek to evoke the sublime through references to shared human experiences, such as those connected with the senses or with daily life.

These songs, if scrutinized in isolation from their context, were of a religious nature; however, when contextualized, they take on additional meaning. The religious content did not stop people from enjoying them in both public and private spheres and dancing to their melodies, signifying their importance within the profane realm. Girls, women, and men in parties that I attended in Morocco danced to these songs shaking their shoulders and hips. At other times, women swayed from side to side in their chairs, snapped their fingers, tapped their feet and repeated the lyrics aloud. When I attended a wedding celebration in Fes in which the first song – *Amdāḥ Maghribiya* – was performed, a friend of mine commented: "When a song about the Prophet is performed, we all stand as a sign of respect to the theme of the song and join with singing along

and dancing." Then, the women stood in a circle clapping their hands and some swayed from side to side.

In addition to the meanings of the songs expressed so far, sometimes, the pilgrimage songs carried social and political messages interwoven with the religious message. For example, in Nass El Ghiwane's *Allah yā Mawlānā*, the singers expressed, to God, their plea which is rooted in lived experience and daily concerns. The lyrics that affirm "O My condition is not hidden from You; You are the One, God," do not only refer to a plea, or prayer, rooted in a religious condition but refer to daily injustice in the form of poverty or specific hardships that people face in their daily lives. As Najat stated: "In their songs, Nass El Ghiwane spoke of social and political meanings, especially the social injustice and oppression that people [of Morocco] faced at the time."

During the reign of king Hassan II (1961-1999), the audiovisual landscape was controlled by the state and heavy censorship was placed on television, cinema, radio channels, and printed media (Boum 2012).[314] Therefore, Nass El Giwane and their songs were part of an alternative artistic movement that developed at the time.[315] This situation might contribute to references to Mecca as a symbol of an ideal Muslim *umma* or even a *watan* (homeland) to which Muslims aspire in the face of injustice and their daily struggles.

Additionally, in discussing the song with Najat, I learned that *Allah yā Mawlānā* clearly creates a space where the sacred and the profane intersect to give a clear narrative of post-independence Morocco, a society that has been overwhelmed with social disorders, pessimism and repression. These songs offered a consolation in times of hardship and oppression. In *Allah yā Mawlānā*, visiting the Prophet and going to Mecca

[314] The new Moroccan pop musical culture emerged at a period of intense political and social unrest (1956-1973), in which the political stage was dominated by a confrontation between the king and the nationalist movement (Istiqlal). Following two military coups (in 1971 and 1972), the state censored all kinds of cultural production and political oppression in a period known as the Years of Lead (cf. Miller 2013).

[315] The music of Nass El Ghiwane and other bands was monitored by the state and thought to be a vehicle for shaping opinions dangerous for the political establishment (cf. Aadnani 2006).

is expressed as a way of facing the hazards of everyday life. When the group sings:

> The Prophet, Oh my neighbors
> If I only have food, I will walk to him tomorrow
> The light will return to my eyes
> To visit the Kaʿba and circulate it

It might be that creating the image of faraway ideal Mecca was as an escape from the dire circumstances being faced daily and offered an image of hope that there is another, better world that the singers and listeners might aspire to reach as well. The strength of these songs is also evident in their enduring popularity; they were composed more than four decades ago. At the time, they incorporated popular elements in newly composed songs but they continue to be popular in Morocco today. Over the course of my fieldwork, I heard newer versions of these older songs. For example, a new remake of *Allah yā Mawlānā* was released in 2016 by Lebanese-Swedish singer Maher Zain.[316] The songs were performed by both male and female vocal performers showing that they were popular not only in Morocco, but also beyond.

The recycling and refreshing of age-old lyrics testify to their continuing appeal and underscore the fact that the Hajj is an event of great significance and far-reaching ramifications. It seems not only to be part of the construction of self and personal identity, but also of community identity. The Hajj songs have acquired a national resonance, above that of local group identity. Thus, people in Morocco today can still relate to the themes of these songs, which reach back in time, and continue to be popular. Whatever the social context or additional layers of meaning attached to them, the core element remains unchanged.

[316] Maher Zain is a Lebanese-born singer based in Sweden. He is famous of various religious-themed songs that combine the genre of RnB music with pop music and spiritual characteristics of the lyrics (Rizqiyah and Lesmana 2018, 17-24).

Conclusion

This chapter reflected on how songs play a role in showcasing the presence of Hajj and Mecca in the lives of Moroccans, either as a personal memory, or as part of a collective story of an ideal world for which everybody longs. In this chapter, I argue that pilgrimage songs provide a sociocultural space for people to express their longing not only for pilgrimage but for perfection represented by Mecca, and also offer a medium to express and evoke emotions and expressions of piety. These songs, I argue, reveal a conceptual and structural orientation to pilgrimage as being central in the everyday lives of Muslims in Morocco. Songs, I have shown, reflect the religious and devotional sentiments, attitudes and wishes of Moroccans in connection with religious and spiritual entities such as Mecca and the pilgrimage. The songs are functional for both those who have completed Hajj and those who aspire to do so. For the former, the combination of music and evocative lyrics regenerates some of the positive emotions associated with Hajj; for the latter, the songs act as inspiration prompts to fulfil this pillar of the faith.

In Morocco, I often listened to songs – together with my friends – in every kind of collective ceremony, including festivals, wedding celebrations, and parties. In addition, individuals listened to these songs in private spheres and together with family members and friends, an experience which often initiated conversations related to the themes of the songs or their performers.

Each occasion has its songs, many of which give praise to God and the prophet Muhammad and invoke their help and blessings in daily matters and in the hereafter. Holy sites, especially Mecca and Medina, are referenced in many popular songs and pilgrimage was present as a theme, even when the celebration was not related to the Hajj. The diverse profane natures of the settings for these songs underscores the fact that Hajj permeates all aspects of civil, social and religious life; there is no strict demarcation between what is appropriate for the religious domain and what suits the everyday realm.

Feelings of longing and remembrance of pilgrimage in their busy everyday lives were two of the themes expressed by Moroccans I got to know during my fieldwork. Many of my Moroccan friends shared various songs with similar themes with me or with other friends through social media platforms. Other songs were podcast on radio and TV and I listened to some in taxis or during shopping trips with my Moroccan friends. Thus, the private experience of Hajj becomes a spiritual entity to be shared and disseminated among friends and family.

As a form of popular expression, the ultimate role of popular pilgrimage songs in Morocco is to provide a reflection of, and also a meditation on, the importance of pilgrimage to Mecca in the lives of Moroccans. Furthermore, I have shown that the political and religious exist side by side and arguably merge in one and the same song. The bands whose songs are discussed here reflect an intimately interwoven and mutually sustaining blend of the sacred and the profane.

The themes of the songs in themselves voice the religious realm through drawing on the physical, daily human experiences (such as hunger, thirst, love and longing) to convey an abstract and elevated quest for spiritual fulfilment. This is not surprising: humans have only so many reference points on which to draw. But this technique of accessing the spiritual by metaphorical links with the mundane and the physical may be a factor in making the songs so easily accessible and transferrable from one context to another. In return, the spiritual elements of songs inform the mundane occasions during which they are performed, in a reciprocal and seamless cycle of integration.

CHAPTER TEN

The Pilgrimage of the Cat and other Hajj Stories: Performing Piety and Moral Transformation through Storytelling

"…Tell them the story so that they may reflect."
(Qurʾan 7, 176)

Introduction

Ysra and her mother Najla were delighted that Souad, Yusra's grandmother, had come to Mohammedia from Meknes a few weeks in advance of *ʿīd l-kbīr,* which she liked to spend with her daughter's family. The three women and I gathered in the kitchen to prepare lunch. Ysra put a kettle on, opened the fridge and took out a large bag of fresh mint to make Moroccan tea. Next to her stood her mother, stirring a steaming pot of chicken stew on the stove. On a small chair, I sat next to Ysra's grandmother, Souad, facing a small cooker, comprising a single gas tank and burner that was placed on the floor. Souad first placed a large eggplant directly in the flame and waited for a while before turning it to the other side. Skinned, the roasted eggplant together with similarly skinned tomatoes, bell peppers and spices were necessary to make *zaʿlūk*, a popular Moroccan side dish. By the side of the only kitchen window, a small radio was placed on a wooden table. The sound of Moroccan songs was reaching us, yet not distracting us from our conversation.

Souad was telling us a story about her neighbor when the radio podcast stopped for an announcement break. From the radio, we heard a familiar chant: "*Labbayka Allahumma labbayk; labbayka lā sharīka laka, labbayk …*" Well known to the four of us, the *talbiya* is the prayer invoked by the pilgrims as an expression of their determination to perform the Hajj. We stopped our conversation to hear what came next: "Dear pilgrims," a female voice announced, and continued: "If your first

destination is Mecca, remember to carry your *iḥrām* on the airplane with you… And make sure you follow the instructions of the Ministry of Religious Affairs regarding pilgrimage ritual." The voice faded into the *talbiya* again, indicating the end of the message. This announcement was about 30 seconds long, after which Moroccan songs continued. Commenting on the announcement, the grandmother said:

> My father used to tell us about his grandfather, who, wanting to go to Mecca, walked on his feet all the way from Morocco… When he returned, he had so many stories to tell about people he met on the way; daily jobs he had to do to make money and feed himself, and stories of those he met in Mecca. It took him about a year to reach Mecca… As a child, I heard many stories of the Hajj, of the people who walked to Mecca and others who took to the sea… I learnt a lot from my father through these stories…

Upon hearing her mother's comment, Najla turned to us and assured us that she, too, had heard many pilgrimage stories from her own parents. She told her mother: "Yes! Tell the girls the story my dad told us." "Which one?" the mother asked. Najla answered: "The one about the man who never went to Hajj … It was one of my favorites!" The older woman placed another eggplant on the fire in front of her, and began the storytelling…[317]

Storytelling about the Hajj is the main theme of this chapter, a strand of enquiry prompted by many exchanges such as the one above. Following the lead given by the conversation I had with Ysra, Najla and Souad, I look at storytelling practices in Morocco as a widespread activity, including genres of family anecdotes, folktales, and historical accounts, focusing particularly on stories with the pilgrimage theme.

During my fieldwork, I witnessed many occasions where stories of the pilgrimage were told in the context of everyday life. Some of these stories were narratives of personal experiences that related to the pilgrimage. Other stories were tales orally transmitted from one

[317] Fieldnotes, 04/09/2015.

generation to the next as folk tales, whilst a third group of stories were shared electronically, either on social media platforms or through mobile communication applications like WhatsApp. Through reflecting on stories of pilgrimage, both personal stories and fables which I was told during my fieldwork, I argue that sharing stories in Morocco is a communicative strategy for illustrating Muslim identities, discussing morality, and reaffirming the narrator's commitment to Muslim piety. I will show how the telling of effective, relevant stories becomes a vital attribute, or quality, for influential social practice. The stories people tell offer insights into how they make sense of themselves and their social world. Stories, in this view, are not only narratives that people tell, but also things people live (Polletta et al. 2011). Sometimes, the stories reveal a common wisdom that questions the elevated ambience surrounding pilgrims and at other times those stories reflect on historical and personal events. However, all are laced with moral messages, such as the call to the way of God, or guiding people towards being more compassionate towards others, with the eventual aim of showing them the light, enabling them to believe in God and submitting to Him. I will show how sometimes particular tales and stories are repeated in more than one version and argue that this is the case because they have a bearing, as a whole or in part, on the context and the message the narrator wants to transmit.

The Moroccan tradition of storytelling – to which a brief overview is given below – is too rich to describe for the purpose of the argument in this thesis. My focus, therefore, is on four specific stories, one of which includes a shorter fable that is embedded within its larger narrative. Drawing on the link between storytelling, everyday life, and cultural identity, this chapter explores the occurrence of pilgrimage in these stories. Yet, before introducing the four stories as the main pillars to my structure, I will briefly discuss traditions of storytelling, past and present in Morocco, in relation to the promulgation of a particular morality as my theoretical point of departure.

Storytelling: a historic means of discussing shared morals, attitudes and values

Storytelling is a powerful force in the lives, experiences, and identities of people across the globe where legends, myths, epic folk tales, and sagas are told, and Morocco is no exception to this pattern. (cf. Rahmouni 2015; Hamilton 2011). Storytelling was an integral part of Moroccan culture probably well before the Arab conquest of North Africa in the seventh century and was already deeply ingrained in the pre-existing Amazigh culture (Hamilton 2011). For the Amazigh, telling stories and singing songs were important parts of their daily lives and religious rituals. At the time, storytellers would travel between villages and marketplaces telling people about different ways of life in other regions, providing a window to the outside world, almost like an early form of news media (Ibid).

Oral traditions of storytelling in Morocco including *al-ḥalqa*, a gathering in a circle where people gather around storytellers who narrate their tales in market squares, has been a ground for social commentary and for public entertainment that extends back to ninth century Moroccan history (Amine and Carlson 2008, 72). The written mention of storytelling as a Moroccan tradition appears first, to my knowledge, in the seventeenth century in the work of the theologian El Hassan Al Youssi, who, upon arrival in Marrakech in the year 1650 CE (1060 of the hijri calendar), listened to comic stories told in public at the major square of the city. Al Youssi recognized the tales as a means of teaching religious doctrine and disseminating local customs and traditions. In Morocco, as in other places, storytelling is a necessary framework for discussing the past and at times it can become a palpable foundation for understanding the present (cf. Rahmouni 2015).

The oral tradition in Morocco is one that infuses daily life and is still very strong, from the tradition of *al-ḥalqa* to casual accounts shared at breakfast tables or around evening mint tea in family gatherings, and to daily conversations among people who meet for the first time on a train or in a taxi. The enjoyment of stories and in the spoken word was very much in evidence everywhere I went in Morocco. I listened to

accounts of the country's historical figures, the arrival of Islam, colonization and resistance, the hundreds of saints, and much more. Some stories covered personal events, while others were transmitted from parents or grandparents, collective narratives, repositories of cultural traditional folklore, that have been passed through generations. These stories when not connected to the current daily lives of narrators or their audience, are selected, organized, and evaluated for certain occasions and events. Among these stories, the Hajj was present both as a thematic backdrop and as a subject of discussion.

My point of departure in the analysis of storytelling is the power of *lkelma/awal* (the oral word in Moroccan Arabic and Berber, respectively) which is evident in many deep aspects of Moroccan culture (cf. Sadiqi 2003). Storytelling in Morocco was – up to relatively recent times – based almost exclusively on the oral medium. In Moroccan society, the transmission of knowledge and experience is still dominated by oral narrative, as opposed to written. Statistics from the 2014 census showed that the illiteracy rate was 32 percent of the population. (High Commission for Planning 2015). This means that a significant number of Moroccans are not fully comfortable with the written word, and the spoken narrative continues to assume a far greater social importance than in societies with a long tradition of large scale literacy.

The mention of public storytelling evokes a sense of an older, oral tradition of transmission of community history and knowledge. Public narratives assume a special importance as a conduit for the communal reception of information and values which are not necessarily conveyed in written form. Therefore, in present-day Moroccan society, the oral word still holds sway and has authority in personal narratives. In addition to Sadiqi's argument, I shall also quote from the work of Michael Jackson, who in his book *The Politics of Storytelling* (2002) defines storytelling as a "coping strategy that involves making words stand for the world, and then, by manipulating them, changing one's experience of the world" (Jackson 2002, 18). This hints at a different function of the narrative: a transformative, operational function. Stories do not simply transmit a stream of events, but the narrator can actively manipulate the

narrative content, structure and style in such a way as to superimpose upon it a view of the world, or indeed as Jackson says, in order to change one's perception of that world.

In the following, I first present each of the four pilgrimage stories and describe the setting in which they were told and then discuss their significance for both the narrators and listeners, recognizing what Abu-Lughod reminds us, namely that "a story is always situated; it has both a teller and an audience" (Abu-Lughod 1993, 15).

The Hajj of Fadila and her husband

Al-ḥājj Yousef had been working in a governmental office for administration of pilgrimage affairs for around twenty years. In those years, he had many encounters with pilgrims. One of the stories that he shared with me one afternoon, as we were discussing his work, was the story of Fadila. One reason for sharing this story was Yousef's insistence that a person's ability to perform the Hajj is linked with fate and destiny. What follows is my translation of Yousef's story:

It was three months before the Hajj season of 2007. There was a woman who came to my office to ask for a favor. The woman, who had previously registered for Hajj along with her husband, and had been successfu lly selected in the *qurʿa*, and paid the expenses of Hajj, wanted to cancel her journey to Mecca. Why? I asked her. I wanted to understand.

The woman said: "My husband has had an accident, a car accident. He was taken to hospital and he is in a critical condition… Doctors say that he has many broken bones and they do not even know if he will ever wake up! I do not think we can go to Hajj!"

I was going on Hajj in 2007 too; I was excited and eagerly awaiting the experience. I told her that in order to give up their right to a Hajj visa, they would have to fill in an application and upon its approval, she could reclaim her money. I also, however, told her to wait. "Who knows, let's hope your husband will get better," I told her.

The woman agreed to wait and left. Three weeks later she showed up in my office again. She had a large file that contained her husband's medical report, signed by five doctors who were responsible for his treatment. The report stated that the man had fallen into a coma following the accident and would need several months to recover. I asked the woman again: "Are you sure you want to do this? Do you need the money for your husband's treatment?" The woman said that her husband had enough funds to cover his treatment. "If you do not need the money," I told her, "then wait some more!" The woman looked reluctant, but she just nodded her head in agreement and left.

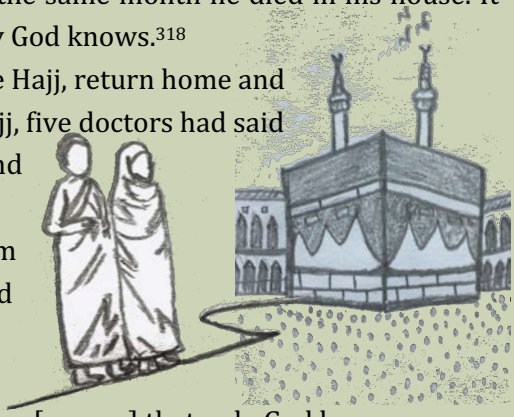
It was two weeks later that she returned to my office, this time with her daughter. She said that her husband was still in a coma and that she had little hope that he would recover. The daughter asked why I was against her mother's decision. I told her that I hoped they would wait because if they withdrew their Hajj registration, they would lose their opportunity to perform Hajj that year. I told her: "I can't take off the name of someone who was selected for Hajj. It feels wrong to do so! I do not want to be a reason for their failure to perform Hajj that year." The daughter said that she understood my point and asked her mother to wait a few more days.

It was the third of December 2007 when the woman came to my office again, together with her daughter. I was worried; I thought to myself: "She must have come to ask me to withdraw her registration and claim her money back again." I was worried that she carried bad news about her husband; May God Have Mercy on Him! I thought to myself. Without introduction, she said: "We will go on Hajj !" On November 27, just one week earlier, her husband had woken up. He stood on his feet five days later and the doctors said that his bones were healed. "It was miraculous," she said and told me that her husband insisted on going on Hajj.

On the day of travel, we travelled on the same plane. The man who had had the accident stayed in the same hotel, and in Minā he was in the same tent with me. He completed the ritual of the Hajj and we returned to Morocco on Friday, January 11, 2008.

On Thursday I went to work, when, in the afternoon the wife of the man and his daughter came to my office. I welcomed them with '*Allah yataqabbal*' [May Allah accept your Hajj]. I noticed that the woman was wearing a white *jellaba*, normally worn either by women going on Hajj or by widows. She said: "May God have mercy on him; he passed away."

I remember that we returned on the same flight on January 11, and on Monday the 14th day of the same month he died in his house. It was for *ḥikma* [reason] that only God knows.[318]



It was his destiny to perform the Hajj, return home and then die… Before he went on Hajj, five doctors had said that he would not be able to stand before the season of the Hajj and would not be able to perform the ritual but with the will of God he was able to stand, go on Hajj, perform it and return to his house where he died… for a *ḥikma* [reason] that only God knows…

The Pilgrimage of the Cobbler

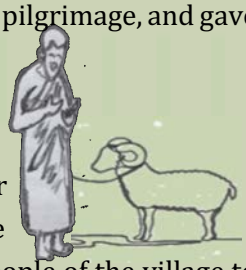
At the kitchen of Souad, mentioned in the introductory vignette, the conversation continued with the grandmother commenting on the current day Hajj procedures. She remarked that even though Hajj was accessible for people who did not need visas, for example, it was still difficult, as it was a dangerous endeavor, one that can take a long time in preparation. She noted that at times like those, people have different kinds of difficulty as, for example, travel itself may have become easier, yet pilgrims encounter problems associated with the modern management of the Hajj (see Chapters Two and Six). For instance, pilgrims must navigate bureaucratic obstacles such as the *qurʿa* and the associated expenses of Hajj which are often beyond the capacity of many Moroccans. She said that when she was a child, her father told her a story about a man who always prayed to go on Hajj but was never able to make

[318] *Ḥikma* refers to reason, wisdom or philosophy.

the journey for practical reasons. At this point in the narrative, the daughter supported her mother by underlining the evaluative comment about the difficulty of performing Hajj in the past. This identifies a key theme: the older generation were obliged to make greater sacrifices and take greater risks than modern pilgrims. The women underscored a sense of a shared reverence for the past, for the contribution and self-sacrifice of ancestors. They communicated this positive attitude by jointly constructing the following oral narrative of the story of the cobbler, in my translation:

A long time ago, a cobbler lived in a small village with his family. For thirty years the cobbler lived in the hope of performing the Hajj. "This year I have saved enough to go for Hajj," he told himself. He bought his *iḥrām* and got ready to leave for Mecca. Before leaving, he went to the local market to buy his family a sheep to be slaughtered on the day of *ʿīd*. On his way back, the sheep entered a wrong house; it was the house of his neighbor. He knocked on the door to ask for his sheep, but a little excited girl came out and thanked him for his gift. Looking inside the house, he saw the sheep and three other young girls gathering around it. The house was almost empty apart from an old carpet where the girls sat. The girl's mother came out and apologized for her daughter's excitement. The man learned that the family had been without food for three days and the hungry girls were happy to see the sheep.

Surprised by the neighbor's acute poverty and their hunger, the man's heart bled, and he shed compassionate tears. He went home, took the three hundred dirhams he had saved for the Hajj pilgrimage, and gave the poor widow the money.



All the same, the man still desired to go on Hajj and prayed for God to accept his deed.

Days and months passed, and it was time for those who had left for Hajj to return home. After the pilgrimage season was over, Abdullah joined the people of the village to welcome the pilgrims. Those who had already returned from the Hajj approached Abdullah by saying, *Hajj mabrūr in-shā'Allah!* [May God accept your pilgrimage].

The man was surprised and did not understand. One of the returning pilgrims told him that when they were performing their *ṭawāf* in Mecca, they had seen him there. They had seen him circulating the Kaʿba with other pilgrims. Even though the cobbler told them he had never been on Hajj, the pilgrims swore that, with their own eyes, they had seen him there, in Mecca.

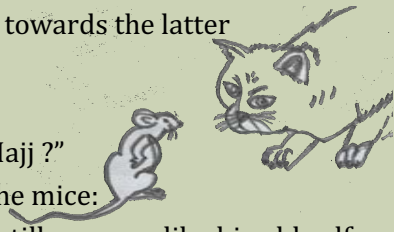
The Pilgrimage of the Cat

In addition to the story of the cobbler, Najla related a second story, which fits into the tradition of fable, wherein anthropomorphism ascribes to the animal kingdom the attributes, including speech and moral values, of the human world. It is worth including, as it contains another lesson, different from that of the story of the cobbler. My translation:

There once was a cat that went on pilgrimage to Mecca. The cat was known as a troublemaker, chasing and hunting mice. When he returned from the Hajj, the mice thought he had changed to be better mannered. Since tradition demands welcoming the safe return of pilgrims, the leader of the mice decided to pay the cat a visit. The other mice, however, were not convinced. "That cat is our enemy; how can we trust him?" they asked. The leader mouse explained: "Now that he has been to Mecca, and became *al-ḥājj* cat, he is no longer free to do what he used to do in the past. These days, he prays and does good deeds." The other mice were not persuaded. "You go and see him, and check if he has changed," they said. "We shall wait for you here and hear what you say upon your return."

The leader mouse set out for the home of the cat. When he reached it, he entered through a crack in the wall. When he poked his head out of the other side and looked around, he saw the cat sitting on a mat, murmuring prayers and glorifying his Maker.

The mouse decided that the cat had really changed his ways and moved confidently towards the cat with customary greetings. But as soon as the cat caught sight of the mouse, he bounced towards the latter and chased him!



After he had run back to his fellow mice,
they asked him: "How is the cat after his Hajj ?"
"Never mind the Hajj," said the leader of the mice:
"He may have performed the Hajj, but he still pounces like his old self, a cat!"

Said's Unexpected Hajj

Lubna and I arrived at El Jadida, a port city on the west coast of Morocco around 10:15 AM. We had left Casablanca early so that we could enjoy the seaside, see the old city and visit the local shrine of a female saint who was famous in the area before returning to Casablanca on the evening of the same day.[319] Lubna and I had met a few times before making this trip together as an excursion we would enjoy. Our first stop was at a local café with a view of the beach. We ordered breakfast for two people: *ḥsuwa* (rich herbal soup), *msimmin* (square pan-fried dough), olive oil, cheese, honey, and bread, a daily staple in the Moroccan diet. The breakfast came with Moroccan mint tea, the most important drink on a Moroccan breakfast table, and fresh orange juice.

Before our breakfast arrived, Lubna took out her phone and asked me to read a message that she had received on WhatsApp. The message was the story of Saed, which I translate here:

Once upon a time, not many years ago, two pilgrims met on their way back from Mecca.

Waiting for his flight at the airport in Jeddah, Saed made room for a man who was looking for a place to sit. "*Al-salāmu ʿalaykum,*" the old man greeted Saed and sat next to him. "*Wa ʿalaykum al-salām,*" Saed replied.

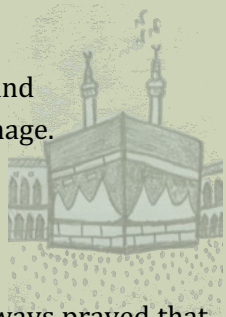
[319] Lubna was introduced earlier in Chapter Seven: she is the factory worker who was able to perform the Hajj, having won a trip at her work, but she had to be accompanied with her grandfather.

The man happily congratulated Saed for performing the Hajj and the following conversation took place between them:
The man: Brother Saed, was this your first visit to Mecca?
Saed: Yes, *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* [Thank God].
The man: I work as a construction contractor and God has given me so many blessings that I was able to win a great contract. Therefore, I decided that the first thing I would do is to perform Hajj to thank God. This, however, is not my first time here. I have performed Hajj in the past and returned ten times to perform *ʿumra*.

The man was very proud of his achievement and of the number of times he had been able to travel from his homeland to Mecca to perform Hajj and *ʿumra*.

Saed: *ḥajj mabrūr, dhanb maghfūr, wa saʿī mashkūr* [May Allah accept your Hajj, grant you forgiveness, and reward you for your efforts].

The man asked Saed where he worked and how it had come about that he could go on pilgrimage.



Saed: I work as a physiotherapist in a private hospital and I do not want to bother you with the story of my pilgrimage.

The man: I am happy to listen; we have to wait for the flight anyhow; we have time!

Saed: I have waited a long time to perform Hajj and always prayed that God will grant me the blessing of visiting His House in Mecca and His Prophet in Medina. Since I started working as a physiotherapist thirty years ago, I saved the money year after year until I had enough money to perform Hajj. I registered and, on the day of payment, I carried the money in a small bag and took it with me to work. I thought I would take a break and go to pay in the money during the day. As I entered the hallway of the hospital, I saw one of our patients and his mother leaving. The young boy was in a wheelchair and had been treated at the hospital for several months. I stopped to greet them and to ask how the therapy session had gone. The mother returned my greeting, but she looked really sad. When

I asked her, I learned that she would not be able to bring her son to the hospital for treatment again, since she could no longer pay for it. I felt sorry for the woman and her child. Directly, I wanted to ask the management of the hospital if they could help by offering a discount. I learnt that the woman had informed the management that her husband had lost his job and it would be hard to make any payments for treatment at that time.

The man: What happened then? What did you do?

Saed: I went to the director and asked him to make an exception and treat the child at the expense of the hospital. The director resolutely rejected my proposal and told me that the hospital was not a charity.

The man: And then?

Saed: Then, I left the director's office. On my way out, I reached out for my bag and remembered the money I was carrying to pay for my Hajj. I raised my head and talked to God, saying, 'Oh God! You know what I have in my heart and that nothing is dearer to me than visiting your House and the Mosque of Your Prophet. You know that I have worked towards the pilgrimage all my life. But today, I have to break my appointment with You; so, forgive me! You are the Forgiving and the Most Merciful'. I had made my decision and I hoped that God would accept it from me. I went to the accountant and gave him all the money I had. He said that it would cover the treatment sessions for six months. I begged him not to reveal who had made the payment and to tell the mother that the hospital had a special budget for cases like that of her son.

The man (said in tears): May God grant you His blessings and create more people who are as virtuous as you. But if you donated all your money to the hospital, how come you performed Hajj after all?

Saed completed his story, describing how he had gone home very sad yet glad that he had been able to solve the problem of that woman and her son. That night, he recounted, he dreamed that he saw himself circling the Kaʿba with pilgrims; people were shaking his hand and saying "Hajj

mabrūr al-ḥājj Saed! You have performed Hajj in the heavens before you performed it on Earth."

Saed: When I woke up, I felt a happiness like I never had before. Even though I was almost certain that I would not be able to be called '*al-ḥājj* Saed', I took the dream as a good sign from God. I thanked God and accepted His destiny. At that very moment, my phone rang; on the other end was the director of the hospital. The director said: 'Save me! A businessman is going to Hajj and he cannot go unless his therapist goes with him. The wife of his own therapist, however, is pregnant and she is not in a good condition so the therapist cannot leave her. The businessman owns many shares in the hospital, and I don't want to lose my job; we are in trouble! Please help me!' I asked the director, 'Would the man allow me to perform Hajj?' He said: 'Yes! Why not? and you would be paid well!' I told him if that was the case, I would be happy to go without any payment. And so, I have now performed the Hajj and God has granted me a visit to His House without paying anything. The man with whom I travelled insisted on giving me a big financial reward as well. Not only that, but also when I told him the story of the woman and her son, he ordered that the son be treated at the hospital at his personal expense. He also decided to establish a special fund at the hospital, dedicated to the treatment of the poor. Additionally, he found a job for the boy's father in one of his companies.

The rich merchant stood up, leaned and kissed Saed's forehead.

The man: I never felt as shy as I do now! I came to perform the Hajj and *ʿumra* one time after another thinking I am being a great Muslim. I think that your Hajj is a thousand times better than mine. And then added: "I came to the House of God; but you, my brother, God invited you to His House."
The man left while saying: "May God Accept Hajj from you!"

God the Most Merciful says, in Sūrat Hūd:
"He will grant you wholesome enjoyment until an appointed time, and give His grace to everyone who has merit" (Qurʾan 11, 3).

The four stories: themes and discussions

The four stories just presented represent three different modes of transmission or categories of narrative: personal, oral-collective and digital-collective. However, despite the range of media or channels used to relay the narratives and the variety of recipients and contexts of consumption, they share strikingly similar features: they all reflect on moral themes that relate to everyday situations.

One of the moral themes discussed in the stories is the role of preordained fate, a sense of the hand of God working behind life's seemingly random events, transforming or shaping what happens into a pattern which is beyond human understanding. When the narratives reach a conclusion, the revelation of the final message underscores the belief that God structures all aspects of human life and the duty of a devout Muslim is to accept and embrace the benign hand of the unseen operating, since what is in evidence is God's will and one's fate.[320] On the surface of it, the story told by *al-ḥājj* Yousef about Fadila's husband who recovered from an accident just in time to perform Hajj, and died upon return, is of a different nature compared to the other stories. The other stories were told to me in the form of hearsay, an example of collectively shared popular stories. *Al-ḥājj* Yousef's story, to the contrary, is presented as a personal experience. Nonetheless, all four stories reflect on the complex relationships between the belief in destiny and the longing for Mecca, conveying messages about appropriate moral dispositions and moral action.

[320] Muslims use different expressions when talking about fate including *qadar* or *qaḍāʾ wa qadar,* meaning the decree of God or predetermination (Gardet 2012); *qisma* or *naṣīb*, both meaning share (or 'one's share in life') and destiny (Bosworth, 2012). Moroccans mainly use *qadar* meaning destiny, *al-miktāb* meaning 'what has been written [by God]' and *qaddar-Allāh* meaning 'God so determined'. They also use the expression *'qaddara Allāh wa mā-shāʾa faʿal'* meaning 'God so determined and did as He willed' which is derived from hadith (cf. Muslim, book 1, hadith 100) and '*al-miktāb mā minnu hurūb*' meaning 'destiny cannot be escaped'.

Several reasons made the story of Fadila important for *al-ḥājj* Yousef on an individual level. *Al-ḥājj* met the woman and knew the story of her husband and felt responsible for their Hajj performance. In his words:

> I did not want to be a reason for them not going on Hajj … If they withdrew their registration, that meant they would miss the Hajj … And if the man got better, it would be too late for that year. They would have to go through the process again and I never wanted to be a reason to stop anyone from going on Hajj…

The experiences of *al-ḥājj* Yousef through his work and the stories of pilgrims he dealt with were important factors in his own development of piety. Through them, he reflected on the virtue of patience and 'trusting God's will'. He expressed how the stories of pilgrims taught him to think about the wisdom underlying life's occurrences and the reason behind certain events in one's life:

> The story of Fadila and her husband made me realize that there was a reason behind it that only God knew; there was the explanation in the story... Five doctors said that the man would not be able to stand on his feet not even perform Hajj … He, however, stood, traveled to Mecca, performed the rituals, and returned home… It was the ability of God to enable the man to become a pilgrim before dying… God's wisdom was behind these events...

Al-ḥājj Yousef's faith defied logic: he may have fully understood the clinical diagnosis, but such was his belief in an ultimate pattern and design to life, controlled by God, that he could suspend his more rational faculties and trust in God. Of course, the main message of the story is that the 'correct' attitude to adopt is to have trust in God.

Another variant on this interpretation was suggested in *al-ḥājj* Yousef's story of Fadila when he shared it with one of his male colleagues, Jamal, who agreed with the stance of *al-ḥājj* Yousef towards Fadila. Addressing his colleague, Jamal said:

> You might have had a feeling that the man would get better in time to be able to perform the Hajj … It is a great responsibility to be in charge of taking such a decision… You had to take a moral stance to help the woman…

Indeed, for the two men, the action of *al-ḥājj* Yousef originated from a moral responsibility both as Muslim and as an official responsible for the Hajj application process. Thus, in addition to being motivated by deep faith in God's plan, *al-ḥājj* Yousef felt a religious and professional moral imperative to try to enable prospective pilgrims to complete the Hajj. Even if the obstacles seemed insurmountable, his duty was to facilitate the Hajj.

Just as in the story of Fadila for *al-ḥājj* Yousef , the story of the cobbler held much meaning for Najla. She told me that she had heard it from her father, who in turn had heard it from his parents: it is thus a transgenerational narrative. According to the grandmother, the cobbler was a poor man, who could not afford to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. He saved money for a long time but when he was finally able to pay for his travel expenses, he faced the dilemma of opting for the Hajj or help his needy widow neighbor. That he chose to do the latter was an indication in the eyes of Souad of the importance of performing good deeds for one's family, neighbors and community that will be judged and rewarded by God, who in the story granted the cobbler the Hajj without him actually travelling from Morocco to Mecca to perform the ritual.

This narrative contains elements of magical realism which evoke other traditional tales, across all cultures, in which virtue is rewarded in a sometimes mysterious, superhuman manner. Essentially, then, it is a morality tale, conveying the idea that virtuous deeds will be seen by the Almighty and rewarded. It serves the social and religious function of underscoring the central tenets of faith, including charity and morality. Although the theme of the story is related to the pilgrimage to Mecca, for Souad it was the question of ethics, in Arabic *akhlāq*, that was significant in the story. According to Souad, a Muslim's duties towards God such as the daily prayers, fasting in Ramadan and performing the pilgrimage to Mecca may be overruled by the duty of being good to other people, including family members and neighbors. Souad explained the message in the story as follows:

> The right actions towards God are not limited to performing rituals, but ensuring that one's actions are done in a way that

> maintain virtues at their optimum level… The man in the story found that helping a destitute neighbor in difficult times is important so decided to give to the poor… God is Merciful and showers His sublime mercy on those of his creatures who show compassion to others and solve the problems of others, as the cobbler had done. Therefore, God not only rewarded him with an accepted Hajj but made him respected by everyone.

Following the theme of the story, Souad considered faith and moral behavior as two sides of the same coin. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the narratives of many Moroccans, the concepts of moral and religious duty coincide or are at least closely related. The story about the cobbler touched on an ethical question that I observed being discussed on many occasions: what is more important – fulfilling one's ritual religious duty of performing Hajj, or fulfilling one's moral religious duty to help one's neighbor? Najla was critical of both Moroccans who borrow money in order to be able to perform the Hajj and those who would go to Mecca several times whilst others around them are in financial need. For her, performing the pilgrimage is not an obligation for those who cannot financially afford its expenses. In her opinion:

> The cobbler in the story did not go to Mecca but God rewarded him for being good to his neighbor…[The Prophet] ordered people to help each other; people should take the money of Hajj and give it to the poor... To me people should make the Hajj here; not go on Hajj in Mecca.

Najla insisted that there are many ways people can earn God's mercy and forgiveness. Najla asserted that the answer would be "helping students, poorer Moroccans in general or helping the less advantaged such as the people of Syria and Iraq." She argued that millions of displaced Syrian and Iraqi refugees, including children, live in great distress and are worthier of help. She asserted that with the money millions of pilgrims pay every year the treasuries of the Saudi government are already overflowing and this money would be better used to help those in need.

Telling the cobbler's story can be seen as part of Najla's positioning, revealing key aspects of the narrator's social contexts. Due to Najla's financial inability to perform the Hajj, she used the story of the

cobbler to reflect on her view of prioritizing other religious duties above the Hajj. This could be seen as a consolatory narrative for her, assuaging her inability to perform the Hajj, or asserting a more nuanced moral debate regarding competing religious imperatives.

Stories also become an important way in which people relate to those around them because the stories provide a means of embedding theological positions in lived experience. These experiences may be an event encountered by the narrator as in the story told by *al-ḥājj* Yousef's or the listener's concerns as was the case with Souad. appeal to people's common understandings of religion via modes of modern communication such as the story of Saed.

It has been said that a story must be heard in order to exist, and only acquires meaning through narration and reception (Jackson 2002). However, it could be argued that new technologies and social media allow many Moroccans to share stories of the pilgrimage without the need of face-to-face oral transmission, such as the narrative quoted earlier in the story of Saed. Arguably, the new media expand the ambit of influence of the narrative, whilst not diluting its significance. For example, the opening words of Saed's story echo a collective/popular story, suggesting that social media draw on older narrative traditions and structures. The opening phrase, *kān fī makān* [once upon a time], is a near universal opener for fictionalized, if worthy, narratives, such as those told to children or those related in moral sermons. The story of Saed came to Lubna via WhatsApp and subsequently she shared it with her friends on social media. Thus, social media is a popular platform for sharing stories and Muslim values, drawing on older story traditions whilst exploiting the opportunities of modern technology. Additionally, we see a recent phenomenon of sharing photographs of the Kaʿba and sometimes images of strange creatures appearing during the Hajj through WhatsApp. Thus, the act of transmitting stories like that of Saed, via modern media, seems to complement more traditional folk tales that have a moral purpose in them.

Eickelman and Anderson (1999) argue that the use of new media technologies, such as the internet, for religious purposes has led to the

fragmentation of religious authority in Muslim societies. This means that individuals and groups can participate in creating new media but it also suggests that, in the process, they create new religious reference points, seemingly diversifying the sources of religious authority (Eickelman 2002). According to Lövheim (2011; 2013), women often create digital ethical spaces where they discuss between themselves cultural and social norms situated in between private and public experiences. This seems to be the case with Lubna; digital spaces, in this case WhatsApp, make it possible for her and her friends to share religious-themed stories and discuss their meaning within a Muslim perspective. When receiving a story via WhatsApp, Lubna has the option to either only read it or share it with other friends. According to Lubna:

> When I find an interesting story online, I share it with my friends via WhatsApp… When a friend shares a good story with important religious theme, I share it again with others. These stories can make their readers think about religion, sometimes activate their religious behavior…

In a sense, Lubna's choice regarding what is worthy of sharing, allows her to exercise a degree of moral and religious authority, determining what messages and what narratives contribute to the overall growth of community and religious faith. In Lubna's opinion, sharing the story of Saed would make her friends think not only about the importance of the Hajj but also about the deeds shown in Saed's behavior. The story acted as a tool of mobilization (cf. Ammerman 2013, 7-10). For Lubna, the story of Saed is a reflection of "how a Muslim should behave."

Although one might see that the story of Saed and that of the cobbler might not be what might be considered as realistic, in both cases, the stories seemed to have an effect on the listeners or readers (cf. Alimi 2018; Powers 2010). For example, when Lubna read the story of Saed on her phone she commented that a charitable act can indeed result in a greater reward: performance of the pilgrimage to Mecca. There was, of course, no proof that the story of Saed was a story of real persons and events. As a reader, I was led to wonder whether the story of Saed might be an appropriated and modified version of other tales, like that of the

cobbler, since the moral message in the two stories is almost the same. Regardless of whether they are rooted in verifiable facts or are more apocryphal creations, by integrating the importance of pilgrimage with charitable giving in the local imagination, the stories are laden with moral messages and serve to re-enforce and perpetuate the central beliefs and values of those who tell, re-tell and absorb them with great eagerness.

Three of the stories, excluding the story of the cat, have a dilemma at their core, a common narrative structural element, and all three give a satisfactory resolution of that dilemma. In each case, the resolution reaffirmed the benign presence and control of God. Two of the stories raised the central issue of religion's role in daily life: is it a purely individual pursuit, divorced from consideration of the wider social context in which it is practiced? Or alternatively, is the religious life to be viewed primarily as one which involves virtuous conduct for the benefit of one's neighbors and the wider world, placing on the devout an imperative to factor other people's material needs into consideration when pursuing religious goals? In short, the stories demonstrate an emphasis on religion as a morally responsive pursuit with a social dimension, not the seeking of individual salvation alone. The story about the ill man who was able to perform the Hajj against all odds before he died does not concern a choice between self and neighbor but had a similarly moral dilemma at its heart: whether a sick man should pursue his goal of Hajj, or cancel? Again, the resolution of the story underscores a religious theme: endurance, hope, faith in what has been written and trust in God.

The story of the cat's pilgrimage showcases another moral lesson. It questions the change in human behavior and attitude following the performance on the Hajj (see Chapter Four). Fatiha, for example, the woman who hosted me in Safi when I visited the site of Sīdī Shāshkāl (mentioned in Chapter Eight), told me when I shared the fable of the cat with her: "I have never heard of cats going on the Hajj … But it is correct that everyone wishes to be called al-*ḥājj* without the internal abandonment of wrong habits and corrupt morals…" Like Fatiha, when I

narrated the fable of the cat making the pilgrimage to other Moroccan friends or research participants, only one out of ten people acknowledged hearing the story before. The moral of the story of the cat, however, was still recognized by those who had never heard the story.[321] There is no doubt that Hajj confers social kudos on those who complete it, signaled via the honorific naming but also having more widespread effects on a person's standing in the community. However, simultaneously, Muslims are aware that surface attributes and signals of piety are no guarantee of deep spiritual commitment. The story of the cat underscores the idea that spiritual transformation of the Hajj can only be achieved through genuine personal effort and committed religious practice; the mere fact of making a pilgrimage will not change a person in and of itself. In Chapter Four, I showed how Moroccans reflected on the impossibility of complete change in the lives of pilgrims as their everyday lives are marked by imperfection, uncertainty and moral failure (cf. Beekers and Kloos 2017; Schielke 2015; 2009). In life, as in the story of the cat who went on Hajj, many people return to their old habits following the pilgrimage.[322]

Hajj narratives as they relate to lived experiences

The previously discussed act of telling and sharing the stories reflects real-life issues that the narrators, or sometimes their listeners, have to deal with. For example, the personal story that *al-ḥājj* Yousef shared, reflected aspects of his work with pilgrims and the struggles that prospective pilgrims may go through before they are able to go on Hajj. When I visited *al-ḥājj* Yousef's office, several local residents came in to ask about the Hajj procedure or to express concerns about not being able to perform the Hajj due to the long process.[323] It is reassuring and

[321] Although not known to many Moroccans besides Najla's family, I have also heard versions of the fable of the cat who went on Hajj in Palestine, Jordan and Tunisia.

[322] For more details on the change in pilgrims following the Hajj, see Chapter Four.

[323] See Chapter Two for details on the pilgrimage application process in Morocco.

comforting in such cases to hear stories like that of Fadila. It also seemed that by sharing these stories, *al-ḥājj* Yousef was projecting a sense of his own satisfaction in his job as facilitator of the Hajj process for people in his constituency. He derived both professional satisfaction and religious reward or *ajr* through his ability to assist future pilgrims by facilitating their application and preparation process before the Hajj.

Najla and Souad touched upon the idea of God's reward from a different perspective; they emphasized that it is not restricted to performing the Hajj or fulfilling one's other religious obligations only. In Marjo Buitelaar's study of Ramadan in Morocco, she describes the ways women can gain *ajr* during Ramadan in particular: visiting mosques and graves, praying, giving alms, distributing food to the poor, painting others' hands and feet with henna (1993, 120). [324] Although these acts are (merely) recommended rather than obligatory as is the case of the Hajj, Souad, found in the story a way to express her evaluation of the performance of Hajj in comparison to wider charitable behavior. The story Najla narrated helped her to come to terms with not having been able to perform the Hajj by offering an alternative source of religious reward and personal satisfaction.

Najla went as far as forwarding an alternative spiritual route to Hajj by actually advocating the performance of good deeds for people in need as another type of Hajj, what she referred to as 'Hajj *in* Morocco'. However, as I have already discussed in Chapter Seven, when Najla's husband expressed his wish to perform the Hajj, Najla was the one to register his name for the national Hajj lottery and supported his travel to Mecca. She offered some of her savings, from her teaching job, and borrowed money from her sister to assist her husband pay the pilgrimage fees.[325] Thus, there existed two distinct forces for Najla, pulling in different directions: Hajj as the performance of charity at home versus the doctrinal Hajj in Mecca. These seemingly irreconcilable positions

[324] In Arabic *ajr* (pl. *ujūr)* means 'wages, pay, honorarium , price, rate, or fee'. For additional ethnographic accounts which discuss *ajr* see Buitelaar (1993) and Benthall (2012).

[325] For more details about Najla's role in her husband's pilgrimage, see Chapter Seven.

illustrate the way we tend to resolve an impossible dilemma, in this case the inability to go on Hajj to Mecca, by adopting a consolatory narrative which suggests an equally valid alternative.

Even though she helped her husband to fulfill his wish to perform the Hajj, arguably sacrificing her own ambitions because of deference to or love for her husband Najla nevertheless continued to maintain a parallel attitude, preferring almsgiving and other kinds of charity to spending tens of thousands of dirhams to go on Hajj. What she learned from the story of the cobbler, is that a person does not need to travel to Mecca in order to gain God's mercy and acceptance as a pilgrim. If a person is a good Muslim, a charitable neighbor, and performs good deeds, God would reward them and accept them as pilgrims without pilgrimage to Mecca. In her words:

> The Hajj can be done here *in Morocco*… Someone who wants to do the pilgrimage can give the money to a poor student who wants to study… Or give the money of the Hajj to a person who needs to have surgery… God would reward those people, just as He rewarded the cobbler.

Both charitable giving and Hajj are fundamental obligations prescribed for Muslims, but if she could manage only one of the two, Najla would choose the former.[326] Najla considered *ṣadaqa* (benevolence or charity) to be an integral part of Muslim religiosity. She insisted that, in the same way that Hajj is a religious duty, charitable acts are likewise a sign of religious devotion and care of the poor and needy in society. Najla's husband, nonetheless, did not share the opinion of his wife and mother-in-law regarding the pilgrimage *in* Morocco. For him, every Muslim longs to perform the Hajj, much as he did himself before going to Mecca. He pointed out that eventually, God rewarded the cobbler by accepting his wish to fulfill his obligation of Hajj performance, even though he had not actually travelled to Mecca. These differences of approach and attitude to religious duty within the same close family – and even within the minds of individuals – represent the balancing of competing priorities

[326] For further analysis on charity in Islam see, among others, Bensaid and Grine (2013); Bonner (2003); Ibrahim and Sherif (2008).

and religious imperatives within a pragmatic context of costs, opportunities and alternative options.

Souad offers a different case as she lives alone in the city of Meknes, apart from the times she travel to visit her children, as was the case when I met her. At the age of 85, she knows that her chances to perform the pilgrimage are very limited. She can afford to perform the pilgrimage neither physically nor financially. Although she is relatively strong for her age, if she ever decided to perform the Hajj she would need a companion to look after her. Therefore, the story of the cobbler can be seen as a way of responding to her social situation and her related psychological needs (cf. Linde 1993; Counted and Zock 2019). Indeed, Souad seemed to have found attachment and consolation in the story about the cobbler for her own inability to perform the Hajj herself.

Listening to how stories like the ones under discussion here were narrated, I noted that often they are jointly constructed. The listener tended to play a subtly active role, encouraging and prompting the narrator, and – most crucially – endorsing the moral code at the end. It seemed that a religious blessing, a saying carrying approbation, support and deep appreciation is often the rejoinder that finalizes the narrative. In a sense, the community reception of the tale's thematic concerns is prefigured in the listener's individual reactions. The very act of telling a religiously themed story to a specific listener, arguably also rests on a set of assumptions regarding shared values. Such an assumption, that the listener and narrator share a moral framework of reference, licenses the latter to expand the story fully. Also, short interjections during the story, questions, exclamations or other supportive comments, encourage the narrator to continue. It could be argued what without the assumed commonality of reference points and the supportive attitude of the listener, narratives would lose a considerable amount of power and narrators would be inhibited in their narrations.

The individual listener therefore also stands as a representative of society, voicing the collective approval of the moral underlying the narrative. Even when stories are shared via social media or WhatsApp, they initiate conversations about the themes of the stories and their

meaning. Thus, the receivers of social media narratives assume the key functions of the listener in a face-to-face narrative, providing a similarly positive re-enforcement and affirmation of shared values. For example, when Lubna shared the story of Saed with her friends on WhatsApp, one of them sent her the following message:

> I have read similar stories before about people who chose to help those facing difficult conditions and God ultimately answered their wish in preforming Hajj or *ʿumra*… God Almighty says: 'Is there any Reward for Good - other than Good?'[327] I believe in God's great ability on changing every condition.

Souad's story and Najla's explanation of its meaning reminds me of an argument that John Bowen makes in his book, *Muslims through Discourse*, concerning "repertoires of reasoning" through which the Muslims he studied attempt to define the norms of public life such as '*adāt* or local customs, scripture, and global concepts such as democracy, human rights, and gender equality (Bowen 2003, 5). Similarly, Najla seems to be trying to engage in just such a subtle and nuanced process of reasoning, accommodating scriptural imperatives within a local framework of real-life necessities and conflicting impulses. For her, the demonstration of care for one's neighbor is a desirable social norm, arguably one to be prioritized; it is also a religious principle, promoted via this narrative. Through her active reading of the story, she is displaying her personal view of the faith and constructing her own approach to the Hajj religious imperative. She argued that going on Hajj is no guarantee that a person would return a better Muslim nor that the pilgrimage was an identifier of how pious or religious a person was. The fable of the cat who went on pilgrimage and returned with his inherent nature unaltered, reinforces this core belief.

Why, then, do people share Hajj narratives? There are many motives: to inspire others, to underscore a spiritual message, to emphasize the benevolence of God and to seek to resolve the tensions

[327] Quoted from Qur'an (55: 60).

between competing Islamic imperatives. Additionally, there is the consolatory motive for those for whom the Hajj is out of reach.

My own interpretation of the over-riding message is that the stories are affirmative of core Islamic principles and virtues, re-enforcing community values. Suggesting that there are different ways to obtain *ajr* than Hajj performance, these stories appear to influence people's decisions and suggest that by helping a person in need, rather than thinking of one's individual desires to perform Hajj, one can actually achieve a greater reward. In such a reading, such an outcome is due to the benevolence of an all-seeing God who accepts the self-sacrifice of foregoing the Hajj, made by the devout would-be pilgrim, who, seeing the needs of fellow Muslims, chooses to priorities these above their own individual spiritual ambition.

Conclusion

In this chapter on pilgrimage-themed storytelling practices in Morocco, I have shown that the Hajj and stories about the Hajj are deeply integrated into practices of faith in the daily lives of people. Four stories were presented: the first was a personal experience that I heard from a local employee about a sick man who was able to perform Hajj before his death. The second was associated with a cobbler, a pious man who through his exceptional piety achieved the faculty of translocating in his body to Mecca where his fellow countryman saw him performing the pilgrimage with them. This narrative was followed by a third fable, which presented the same core message about people's true nature not changing because of Hajj or not going on Hajj, the fable of the cat. The fourth was a story presented as a true-life narrative regarding a faithful man who, due to his piety, self-sacrifice and charitable actions, was rewarded with a pilgrimage to Mecca. I looked at the position of the characters of the stories and their themes, the position of the storytellers, and story listeners.

For most Muslims, the performance of the Hajj is a powerful experience of spiritual transformation. It is therefore not surprising that

it is a regular topic of conversation among Moroccans. One of the functions and purposes of these stories is to provide guidance and moral lessons related not only to the pilgrimage but also to how Muslims should behave in their everyday lives. In the story of the cobbler, for example, the moral of the story is to help one's neighbors and to give to those less fortunate even if that giving came at the expense of a dear wish, such as the pilgrimage to Mecca. In the same story, one sees how the pilgrimage to Mecca, in a mystical, magical manner, was given as a reward to the cobbler upon performing a charitable act.

Another function of the Hajj stories is the offering of exemplary acts which function as a model for the good life. To propose telling those stories was -as explained by many Moroccans- to give the audience the opportunity to assess their position with regards to different matters and correct their actions and behaviors. Najla, for example, expressed criticism of people who are able to perform the Hajj and *ʿumra* repeatedly and argued that those people should use this ability to help the poor in Morocco.

In each of the cases I presented, there was a moral debate at work. These narratives do not simply tell a story but enact a moral dilemma. Characters in two of the stories are placed in a position which tests their ethical and religious judgement: what to choose, pilgrimage or charitable acts? Both stories posit the same response: care for your neighbor (or others) and you will, indirectly, be caring for your own salvation and will eventually be rewarded by God.

The fact that the oral cobbler story has a second life in the digital narrative about Saed shows that it touches a rich moral seam in Moroccan life. The story of the cobbler is an archetypal, magical narrative, fictionalized and akin to a morality tale, yet it resurfaces in high-tech media, re-packaged, but not significantly altered in terms of plot or outcome (apart from the removal of the spiritual translocation) with the transnational nature of social media in relaying such stories.

The stories presented in this chapter are not told to a passive listener, but the listeners appear as actively involved and enter into a conversation, thus negotiating the moral dilemmas presented. The telling

of the narratives is not an act carried out in isolation, but is very much part of an interactive, socially dynamic construction of community and reaffirmation of shared values. There is a simple pleasure also, in both telling and hearing stories, a shared act of communication which strengthens bonds, but these narratives achieve more than this. Their content, embodiment of active religious values and negotiation of the tensions between the religious and the mundane life, construct the wider world of faith and local community.

Further, the formally different nature of the story of the cat, being a fable, nevertheless underscores the concept that Hajj is not a guarantee that a person would return a better Muslim nor that the pilgrimage was an identifier of how pious or religious a person was. The story of the cat raise issues about the ambivalence that pilgrims might face in their lives. Rather than reflecting on the pilgrimage as a perfect experience, it shows the ambiguities involved in the practices of pilgrims. Its structural and stylistic differences give it a qualitatively different tonality whilst underscoring a central position developed in the other narratives. I connect this stylistic difference with the emerging variety of media for narratives, embracing these days the world of WhatsApp and other media platforms. Thus, from the fable of the cat, to magical realism and mystical events in the cobbler's story, to grittily realistic daily narratives of impoverished people, the urge to tell stories which embody, discuss and present religious values and competing imperatives is a profound one, as is amply illustrated in my experience of Moroccan narratives.

CONCLUSION

Mecca in Morocco: manifestations of the Hajj in everyday Moroccan Life

During five specific days of the year, around thirty-two thousand Moroccans join at least two million Muslim men and women from over one hundred different countries in Mecca for the Hajj. At other times of the year, tens of thousands of Moroccans also visit Mecca to perform the *ʿumra*, the non-mandatory pilgrimage. Leaving their country, family and friends, Moroccan pilgrims, embark on the journey to Mecca where they perform the ritual of the Hajj, mixing with Muslims from other countries and sects whose nationalities, languages and traditions might be foreign to them. For the duration of the Hajj season, the pilgrims are physically separated from their daily routines in Morocco. Throughout this research, my central argument is that although the Hajj removes Moroccans from their everyday lives, with its rhythms and customs, nevertheless the distinctive Hajj practices, experiences as well as the meanings that pilgrims attach to the Hajj are shaped by, and in return, shape their daily life-worlds.

The question is, how is that so? Approaching pilgrimage from the perspective of 'lived religion', this thesis is informed by the overarching question: How does Hajj pilgrimage feature in the everyday lives of Moroccans and how are Moroccan views of Hajj reflected in the micro-practices of pilgrims and their wider networks? To answer the over-arching research question, I addressed three sub-questions. The first question asks how the desire to go on hajj, the experience of Hajj performance, and the act of becoming a pilgrim is related to the process of self-fashioning in everyday life. Secondly, I scrutinize how the pilgrimage to Mecca and the meanings attributed to it by Moroccans are informed by various aspects of identity politics and different webs of power relations in which various categories of pilgrims and non-pilgrims are embedded. Thirdly, I examine how the pilgrimage to Mecca is

integrated into social practices and cultural products of everyday life in Morocco.

To produce the empirical data on which the study is based and to answer the research questions, I spent three Hajj seasons and a total of eighteen months in Morocco between the Summer of 2015 and the Winter of 2017. I participated in the daily lives of Moroccans across the full spectrum of life's rich tapestry: I observed their actions, listened to their stories, and interacted with them in their homes, places of work and of leisure. I joined pilgrims during their daily chores, on their shopping trips, and also to weddings and birthday celebrations. I followed the pilgrimage application process and the preparations pilgrims took before embarking on their Hajj journey. I accompanied families as they paid farewell to departing pilgrims at the airport and as they welcomed them back upon return. My conversations were many and varied on all of these aforementioned occasions and, in particular, I discussed at length people's experiences in Mecca and the rich ramifications of the pilgrimage. Thus, I have witnessed the intertwining of rituals and social practices that took place every day, paying particular attention to the activities and topics of conversation around the season of the Hajj.

The structure I chose for this study in a sense echoes the conclusions I have reached about the significance of the Hajj in Morocco: the Hajj experience is a logistical and concrete one, occupying a discrete period of time, yet its lasting ramifications move outwards into ever widening circles, getting entangled in both the religious and mundane life of the pilgrims before they go on Hajj and after they return home. Similarly, my study begins by documenting the practicalities of preparation and the actual rituals and practices of the Hajj. In this part I also examined the varied experiences and encounters with other pilgrims, the concept of the *umma*, as well as various aspects of homecoming. This first part of the thesis comprised the three chapters immediately following the introduction.

In the three chapters that followed, I examined the wider political domain of Morocco and considered the Hajj as a channel for the expression of political and personal identification with the homeland.

Despite the experience of the *umma*, the wider Muslim community which Moroccans experience during the pilgrimage and which they highly esteem, providing them with a sense of belonging, I demonstrated that an awareness of national identity within this wider grouping also occurs. In Chapter Five, for example, I explored the impact of forces external to the pilgrims, such as the state and the media on this process of identification. I also discussed, in Chapter Six, the impact of the Saudi government's control over the Hajj, the modernization and commercialization taking place in Mecca and the way in which Saudi economic power, and political orientation impacts on the religious experience of the Hajj. In this part, Chapter Seven discussed gender politics, examining the specific ways in which the fact of being a woman informed the Hajj experience. I was interested in the limitations placed on women as aspirant and actual pilgrims, as well as the opportunities offered to women by the Hajj in terms of enhancing social prestige and status; significantly, I explored the intersection of class and gender, showing how the benefits of being a female pilgrim do not automatically conferred on a woman of lower social status.

For the third and final ethnographic part of this thesis from Chapter Eight to ten, the focus shifted from pilgrims themselves to the cultural and social embeddedness of the Hajj in domains of Moroccan everyday life. Here, I explored three specific local social and cultural practices, each with its own special connection to the Hajj. In Chapter Eight, I discussed the 'the Pilgrimage of the Poor', a practice rooted in religious observation, but nevertheless contested by many in Morocco who remain unconvinced of its authenticity. I showed how, for many people who cannot afford the pilgrimage to Mecca, the local alternative of the Pilgrimage of the Poor was a technique to connect with the pilgrimage happening simultaneously in Mecca in addition to the social and political dimensions of these local pilgrimages. This topic gave insights into social structure, attitudes and values both to class and to religious practices. In Chapter Nine, I discussed pilgrimage songs which people often listen to in Morocco. I reflected on the significance of those songs as reminders of the pilgrimage and the aspiration to visit Mecca,

revealing how people strive to cultivate pious selves through the portrayal of Mecca as an ideal place. These songs occur in contexts that might seem mundane or distanced from the central religious experience such as parties and celebrations or simply in the routines of daily life. Their occurrence in these situations, however, demonstrates that the religious and mundane cannot be neatly separated but intertwine. Finally, in Chapter Ten, I discussed storytelling as an aspect of Moroccan daily life and showed how Hajj stories carry moral lessons about what is considered to be proper Muslim behavior. The power of these stories lies not in the least in that they reflect the struggles Moroccans face and the decisions they have to make in their everyday lives. I argued that such stories reveal the depth of penetration of the Hajj into the imagination of Moroccans and also serve as a re-enforcement of community values.

How, then, does this thesis fit within larger anthropological debates on pilgrimage, questions of personal piety and ethical formation, and everyday lives of Muslims and their agency? The next section outlines how my findings speak to the theoretical framework that informed the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis.

Pilgrimage to Mecca as a component within the broader anthropology of pilgrimage

In the presentation of my theoretical framework at the beginning of this thesis, I reflected on the importance of Mecca as a pilgrimage center. I argued that, despite the increase in the interest in pilgrimage studies, attention traditionally often focused on two dimensions of a pilgrimage: (1) the site itself and what takes place at it and, within that area, (2) a focus on the concept of *communitas* as outlined in Victor Turner's writings on the subject. During my research in Morocco, I found that, indeed, many people focused on experiences which, from an etic point of view would broadly fall within the phenomenon of *communitas.* In Chapter Two, for example, I demonstrated how pilgrims aspire to visit Mecca, a journey some have to wait several years to be able to take due to financial and administrative constraints. Once they successfully travel to Mecca, however, as we see in Chapter Three, they express their

devotion to the holy Kaʿba and are emotionally moved by seeing it, especially during their first visit to the Grand Mosque of Mecca. Several days of religiously observant movement through sacred space are ritually mapped in Mecca. Pilgrims move in the rhythm of certain rites from circulating the Kaʿba to the city's other holy sites. Immediately after performing the *ṭawāf*, the sevenfold circumambulation of the Kaʿba, pilgrims walk or run between the two hillocks of Ṣafā and the Marwā and drink Zamzam water. Pilgrims collectively participate in those rites as well as others including the standing ritual at Arafat, the stoning ritual near Minā, and visiting the grave of the Prophet after conclusion of the Hajj. Whilst discussing their performance of these rites, pilgrims often speak of feelings of Islamic unity in the space occupied by the pilgrims, very much emphasizing aspects of *communitas*.

Also, we see how Moroccans often refer to the *umma*, the Muslim community, when reflecting on performing the Hajj. In Chapter Three, for example, I present stories of Moroccan pilgrims who spoke about meeting and interacting with people from different cultures, listening to different languages, and mixing across national boundaries whilst in Mecca. For many Moroccan pilgrims, their journey to Mecca was a momentous event, being the first time they had ever left their home country, let alone being a journey to the most sacred place for Muslims. To a considerable extent, therefore, my research data confirms that, although the pilgrimage to Mecca is an experience shared by differing Muslim groups, pilgrims tend to emphasize first and foremost that differences within Islam and among Muslims are re-synthesized into Muslim unity in Mecca, thus confirming Turner's hypothesis concerning *communitas*. Many people who shared their stories with me also dwelled on the significance to them of experiencing difference within unity, of encountering 'otherness', having experienced the *umma* by mingling with other Muslims and, sometimes, literally tasting the *umma* when trying foods that belong to people of other nationalities. All of those experiences might fall into what Turner coined as *existential communitas,* spontaneous feelings of mutual communion and harmony among pilgrims (Turner 1969, 131-140).

I discovered, however, that the ideal of *communitas* as expressed by Moroccan pilgrims did not always seem to be spontaneous; pilgrims are informed by their own expectations about the experience, so one can see a strong *normative* component to it. For example, I found that Moroccans tend to emphasize the importance of complying with God's command specified in the Qur'anic verse: "The pilgrimage takes place during the prescribed months. There should be no indecent speech, misbehaviour, or quarrelling for anyone undertaking the pilgrimage – whatever good you do, God is well aware of it…" (Qur'an 2, 197). As we saw in Chapter Three, people often reported expecting to experience certain feelings of mutual acceptance and recognition of unity on the basis of the narratives of previous pilgrims, and therefore on the basis of a shared discourse that sketches idealistic images of the pilgrimage experience. These references to unity, harmony encountering the global Muslim community in Mecca, is not only used in religious references but is also appropriated in different ways which, in variation to Turner's concept of 'ideological communitas', I would characterize as *strategic communitas*. We see how the Moroccan polity, for example, appropriates these ideas during the pilgrimage season to embrace and promote the ideals of unity and harmony that the Hajj stands for and advocates for similar ideals not only in Morocco but also for Moroccans who in Mecca should act as 'ambassadors' of their country as shown in Chapter Five. The polity in Morocco does this by emphasizing the importance of tolerance and the rejection of disputes and argument, features which are deemed to be essential components of the pilgrim's moral register. More importantly, they do so by realigning these virtues to their allegiance to the Moroccan nation. Through these examples, one can see, that indeed, *communitas* is an important aspect of the pilgrimage. However, it is important to note that the process of political appropriation of this sense of identity also shows that there is contestation within the pilgrimage experience, which is the central theme in the development in the field of pilgrimage studies after Turner's *communitas* paradigm.

Furthermore, the stories of my interlocutors indicate that their actual feelings were not always in line with normative expectations,

sometimes causing disappointment, feelings of shame or even anxiety. Although most of my interlocutors eloquently voiced the importance of Muslim unity and tolerance as part of the Hajj experience, they also spoke about disputes, arguments, and dissatisfaction with some aspects of their pilgrimage experience. Indeed, my research indicates that there exists a predominance of apparent, surface harmony which pilgrims emphasize in their narratives and strive to reach within their pilgrimage experience, which is, however, undermined by obviously contrasting narratives. In Chapters Six and Seven, we see how pilgrims sometimes complain, argue and challenge discrepant elevated expectations that have been pre-formed at home about the pilgrimage. An interesting point, possibly for further future study, is how the character of the narratives of the Hajj, on which both pilgrims and their 'audiences' had to rely in the past, will change as a result of people's current access to modes of communication such as mobile phones and social media. Whereas in the past, during the long journey to - and return home from – hajj, pilgrims had much time to process their experiences into narratives that resonate with ideal representations of the Hajj, today's pilgrims, by contrast, can almost instantly share their experiences and voice their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with those at home. Perhaps more than before, therefore, Moroccan pilgrims' narratives of their pilgrimage to Mecca encompass, and speak to more than one 'grand scheme'.

It is not surprising for such conflicted readings to occur as the expectations and experiences differ from person to person. Through time, aspects of the physical reality of the various Hajj sites themselves has changed, even if the rites carried out there as such may have remained essentially the same. Thus, whilst the main sites that the pilgrims visit, like the Kaʿba, Arafat and the tomb of the Prophet have not changed significantly throughout the centuries, in recent years some rather drastic measures have been taken to modernize the Hajj and to accommodate the enormous increase of pilgrims. Various changes have taken place, including the expansion of the mosques, the introduction of air-conditioned tents, new modes of modern transportation, and pilgrims do not physically point out a sacrificial animal anymore. Therefore, we

see pilgrims producing different narratives, that are sometimes conflicting with those of others who preceded them. While their overall narratives may be similar, the views of recent pilgrims are influenced by such alterations (see Coleman and Elsner 2003).

A theoretical perspective that I found particularly useful in my analysis was to approach the pilgrimage as a site for sensory experiences. In Chapter Three, I demonstrate how pilgrims' narratives of their pilgrimage experience are profoundly related to the senses. In addition to moving physically through space to seek contact with the sacred sites, pilgrims use touch, sight, hearing, and taste in order to relate to these sites. Seeing the Kaʿba for the first time, which moves almost everyone to tears, touching the Kaʿba or the pillars of the mosque, drinking *Zamzam* water and experiencing the renewed bodily health, were all moments which pilgrims described with intensity of expression, often drawing on sensory vocabulary, to convey the overwhelming sensations experienced during the pilgrimage. The sacred and the bodily sensations which evoke emotions mingle in a complex relationship, emphasized by pilgrims, who often claimed that the pilgrimage experience itself is beyond words, if not beyond comprehension.

I have demonstrated that, in their pursuit of conveying what they regard as the ineffable experience of hajj, pilgrims reach for the most readily available linguistic fields, the senses, suggesting that for many, the impact of the Hajj can best be understood through the emotions evoked by bodily experiences. I argue that the idea that the experiences of pilgrims cannot be described in words, and that one has to personally go to Mecca, live the experience through the sensations, may well reflect a desire to convey authenticity as well as the 'purity' and singularity of the experience. Being moved to tears when seeing the Kaʿba for example, as shown in Chapter Three seems to point to a high level of religiosity of the narrator. Representing this experience as a sensational form has an additional performative aspect, possibly as a means to convey the notion that being a good Muslim involves surrendering oneself to the majesty and awe-inspiring nature of the encounter with the sacred spaces, resulting in an overflow of emotion shown in tears.

Most significantly, in looking at the Hajj as a gender-mediated experience, in Chapter Seven for example, one can see the need to take aspects such as gender and class into consideration. As I have demonstrated in that chapter, being a woman, especially a young woman, means that fewer advantages accrue in terms of the process of application, the possibility and experience of travel, and even the performance of the Hajj ritual and recognition for it by others. Other examples of contested regulations and practices relate to women's inability, due to prohibition, to reach the tomb of the Prophet in Medina, which I point to in Chapter Six and also in Chapter Three.

Having considered the above theoretical perspectives, I would argue that to analyze pilgrimage based on the two major frameworks for *communitas* and contestation, might mean ignoring some other and possibly equally important, long term effects of the pilgrimage. This thesis shows, instead, that we should look at the ways in which pilgrims' experiences are diverse, unpredictable and contingent on personal projects of ethical improvement.

Pilgrimage has always been a complex endeavor that is highly dependent on the relationship between the pilgrims' search for meaning and the environment in which they have been operating. It is not positioned exclusively at the pilgrimage site and within the ritual itself, but also is situated within, and is fashioned by, the movement of people, objects and ideas involved in pilgrimage; to contextualize, or frame, pilgrimage fully it is essential to focus on the longer term effects of the Hajj once pilgrims return home on their religious, social, and political everyday lives. This, is the contribution that this study hopes to make to the existing body of work.

Two strands of thought are especially relevant to my analysis. The first is the analytical primacy of the moral, ethical self-formation in the construction of pious subjects within the authorized framework of a religious tradition—that is, to the cultivation of religious virtues and the pursuit of moral perfection, a concept associated especially with scholars in the tradition of Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood. The second strand of thought, calls attention to the inevitability of ambivalence in a multiplex

everyday life, where religious concerns exist alongside a plethora of competing priorities and 'grand schemes', a concept particularly associated with Samuli Schielke.

Ethical self-formation away from Mecca

A key focus of my discussion is on the fact that while pilgrimage is a journey to and through sacred space, it usually also includes a journey *back* or *away* from that space. Following their contact with the sacred, pilgrims return home, inevitably carrying some new quality or capital - moral, spiritual, or even material - as part of the pilgrimage memory and experience. This movement back and the return home itself is a ritualized process of the journey and marks, in a way, the beginning of a new journey, aspects of which are addressed in Chapter Four. Upon their return, pilgrims have a new status within their social networks but also – if their pilgrimage is deemed to have been accepted by God- they believe that they are now free from sins and can begin or continue their lives in a more observant manner. Pilgrimage, in a way, provides an opportunity for the presumption, or the hope, that pilgrims may lead transformed lives upon return. This fact underscores the importance of studying the lives of pilgrims not exclusively within the sphere of their contact with the sacred, a focus which has been the main concern in pilgrimage studies to date, but more broadly within the realm of the quotidian upon return.

Pilgrims focus on the importance of talking, behaving, and dealing with others in accordance with authoritative Islamic teachings in order to refashion themselves as virtuous Muslims subjects. In this respect, the practices of my interlocutors resonate with similar aims and behaviors that are directed towards moral subject formation as analyzed in the work of Mahmood (2005) and Hirschkind (2006). Both of these influential anthropologists argue that through various practices of ethical self-cultivation—which they understand as bodily practices of self-discipline aimed at restructuring a set of moral, sensorial, and affective dispositions in accordance with authoritative Islamic norms—their interlocutors remake themselves into virtuous Muslim subjects.

I would argue that the experience of the pilgrimage is part of the same quest for ethical perfection that pious Muslims aspire to achieve. Pilgrims speak of virtuous behavior that one should maintain during the pilgrimage and in accordance with which they should continue to live when they return home. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, they also focus on remembering God's goodness and that having answered God's call, they should always humbly recall and be grateful for the fact that God has chosen them to visit His house in Mecca. In Chapter Three, we see how pilgrims remember and identify with the stories of Adam, Eve, Abraham, Ishmael and Hagar and also with the life and journey of the Prophet Muhammad, his wives and companions. For instance, in Chapter Four, we see how a husband who returned from the Hajj was determined to treat his wife in an exemplary fashion, following the example of the Prophet, a fact which confirms the relevance of those examples to their self-formation. I suggest that the physical retracing of the footsteps of the Prophet, the imitative re-enactment of his journeys and actions and that of other Muslim exemplars described in the authoritative texts, such as the running between Safa and Marwa, and the stoning ritual at the Jamarat, act to enliven and invigorate the pilgrims' belief system and offer a learning opportunity based on these role models; pilgrims aspire to walk in their footsteps both literally, following their journey and performing the pilgrimage rituals, but also figuratively by aspiring to emulate their actions and acquire their qualities, another 'technique' of self-formation.

The pilgrimage itself is a rare experience for Muslims in which they encounter exclusively fellow members of the faith community. Being able to perform the Hajj in itself, I suggest, acts to distinguish, in the minds of the pilgrims, Muslims from non-Muslims, reinforcing the geographically extensive nature of their religion and possibly bolstering people with a sense of the security in their beliefs. Physically, access to Mecca is limited to Muslims only and those gathered to perform the pilgrimage all represent the Muslim *umma*, a fact which gives pilgrims the opportunity to share ideas but also to situate themselves, as distinctive groupings from a specific cultural background, among other

Muslim communities. I show how these two seemingly contradictory impulses, to unite universally within the *umma* and yet also to distinguish one's distinctive regionality, co-exist.

Being a Moroccan, then, is a highly significant marker of identity, just as being part of the *umma* is. Here we see Moroccans – reinforced by the way the king addresses his population during the Hajj season – stressing the importance of Morocco as a homeland. Although pilgrims strive to visit Mecca and express their longing for the holy places and, in particular, voice this as a visit to the Prophet, they, nonetheless, also express their longing for Morocco once they are in Mecca. In Chapter Five, for example, we see Rashid, the businessman from Mohammedia, expressing his desire to return to his children following his *ʿumra* trip, once the month of Ramadan is over. In Chapter Five we see how Moroccans refer to the well-organized groups of South-East Asian pilgrims as an example to follow. Also, in Chapter Five, we see Muna, the nurse from Casablanca, who thanked God she was Moroccan after meeting people from other nationalities in Mecca, a seemingly incongruous experience which rubs against the grain of the *umma* on one level. For her, the experience made her value her national identity in a way she never experienced before going to Mecca. Does this negate the *umma* experience of unity? Or do pilgrims sense a Muslim overarching identity of *umma* manifested in regional variations, in such a way that it enables them to reassess and re-evaluate their own distinctive thread within the tapestry of the faith? The answer, I argue, can be either, but arguably simultaneously both.

One can also see the active self-formation of pilgrims in Morocco in Chapter Four, where it is illustrated in the way pilgrims strive to live up to their new title of *al-ḥājj/al-ḥājja,* honorific titles that come with special prestige but, at the same time, are laden with the responsibility of being 'faithful' to the new status of someone who has visited Mecca. The title of *al-ḥājj* / *al-ḥājja* is significant as a mark of 'completing one's faith' to be added to the other four 'pillars' that function as such signifiers: testifying that there is one God and that Muhammad is His Messenger, performing the daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and

giving alms to the poor. My study demonstrates that the spiritual transformation implied by the honorific title of *al-ḥājj* / *al-ḥājja* is imbued with significant social capital in Moroccan society. I have referenced the enhanced expectations associated with the title: enduring religious devotion, enhanced moral conduct and even heightened judgement and wisdom outside the religious sphere. In Chapter Four I discuss the interior struggle some pilgrims face to realize these expectations and also the way some pilgrims use their religious title to gain social prestige. This sort of conduct generally attracts opprobrium. Thus, my study reveals that the title of *al-ḥājj* or *al-ḥājja* is not unambiguously a benefit. In and of itself, being a pilgrim can also be a subject of contestation. People in Morocco often discuss how a pilgrim should behave, at times subjecting the conduct of pilgrims to greater scrutiny than that applied to the rest of the social group. Pilgrims themselves also spoke about the importance of being 'faithful' to one's pilgrimage. Thus, I observed the pressure placed on the pilgrim by his/her own expectations after pilgrimage, as well as on the basis of expectations of the wider community, expectations, it is important to note, that are not always realizable, and less likely so in the long run. That might be the reason why many pilgrims emphasized the importance of visiting Mecca again and reliving the experience, an opportunity perhaps to renew the opportunity to acquire the graces associated with hajj.

For many pilgrims, Hajj is an opportunity for spiritual and moral cultivation that helps to create a committed Muslim personality and, subsequently, to contribute to a society which is oriented towards individual and collective self-improvement. Within the complexity of everyday life, we see how pilgrims try – sometimes successfully and at other times not – to live up to high moral standards. In this process, we see individuals constantly making and remaking themselves into what they consider to be good Muslims (cf. Deeb and Harb 2013; Fernando 2014; Jacobsen 2011). This aspiration to be able to be good Muslims, leading a morally meaningful life, might be the reason why some people delay their pilgrimage to the later years of their lives, hoping that that they will be more naturally inclined to leading more observant lives. Also,

age is an advantage to some pilgrims since the pilgrimage is also an act of penitence, of obedience and is a fulfilment of one's last religious duty in preparation to meet one's Creator (Haq and Jackson 2009; McLoughlin 2009). We do, however, increasingly see younger Moroccans performing the pilgrimage nowadays, which can also be an early expression of the preferred future and devout trajectories of their lives; an alternative, less complimentary reading is to suggest that such an early completion of the Hajj could be a quest for moral or social capital.

Whilst I have tried to take seriously the inner processes through which religiosities are shaped as pilgrims strive to cultivate personal piety and ethical formation, I have not sought to focus specifically on the pursuit of pious perfection. Conversations with my interlocutors and participation in their daily activities concentrated on a variety of everyday life concerns including work, family, financial issues, social relationships, as well as their aspirations and disappointments, simply put their 'ordinary lives' (cf. Schulte Nordholt and Steijlen 2007). For instance, the very fact that pilgrims want to go back to Mecca, a desire which was expressed by many Moroccans especially in Chapters Four and Seven, shows that everyday life has an impact on religiosity in one way or another; this fact lends weight to the significance of studying ordinary Muslims' ambivalent commitment to both religious and nonreligious concerns (e.g., M. Marsden 2005; Schielke 2015). Therefore, to get a nuanced view on the relation between pilgrimage and self-formation, it is important to understand how pilgrims express ambivalence, moral failure, and imperfection.

Hajj in the everyday life

Moroccan pilgrims, I have demonstrated, negotiate their status as pilgrims both whilst being in the sacred sites of Mecca and also when they return to the more mundane reality of daily life through a complex process of self-formation. However, everyday life, I argue, as shown in Chapter Four, presents various challenges that require decision-making: should one ask others to address one with the honorific title of *al-ḥājj or al-ḥājj?* Should a person conduct business which might entail religious

compromise, such as the inability to perform prayers on time? Should all those who have performed Hajj expect to be treated with the exact same regard as the more financially fortunate and socially elevated fellow pilgrims? Should a person who has already been to Hajj go repeatedly to Mecca for *ʿumra*? These challenges are not only limited to the everyday lives of pilgrims after the Hajj but present themselves even before the journey itself and are, in fact, part of everyday Muslim life. In Chapter Two, other questions were asked, such as: Can one borrow money to perform the Hajj, even though Hajj itself is not mandatory for those financially disadvantaged? Should one register for illegal Hajj options that would involve avoiding the *qurʿa* process, for example? Throughout my study, I demonstrate that these are all questions that pertain as much to the domain of everyday life as they do to piety. This is why it is important to participate in the lives of pilgrims on a long term basis, as this allows a closer examination of how they negotiate religious issues and dilemmas in their everyday lives (see, e.g., Marsden 2005; Marsden and Retsikas 2012; Schielke 2015; Schielke and Debevec 2012).

By mapping the everyday lives of pilgrims in Morocco, I have not only focused on the processes that take place before, during and after the Hajj, but also looked at the variety of ways in which the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the idea of Mecca itself, is appropriated into everyday life in practice. In Chapter Two and Four, for instance, I show how many pilgrims try to justify their choices and actions and answer the moral dilemmas by means of reference to some Islamic authority, ultimately by returning to the Qurʾan and the sunna. These kinds of questions, nonetheless, are not easily answerable simply by reading the sources, or without debate. Rather, in their specific conditions, we can see tensions or even an opposition which exists between textual dictates and individual practices and predicaments. We see, for example, people arguing for, and others arguing against, repeated visits to Mecca by the same person once they have completed their Hajj obligation. One strand of argument would say it is better to give the money to the poor or to someone who has not yet been to Mecca whilst another would say that being able to afford the journey is a blessing of God and that the happy

recipient of such blessings is thanking God by visiting His house again and again. In studies of religion in everyday life, one often sees analysis based on a discrepancy between moral norms and individual behaviors (cf. Schielke 2009; Debevec 2012). One can argue, as Schielke does in the case of Ramadan (2015, 50), that Hajj is a time of simple commitment. The lives of pilgrims after returning from the Hajj, however, are characterized by complex ambiguity. Indeed, I would argue that ambivalence, ambiguity, and contradiction are, in any case, part of the complexities of Muslims' everyday religiosity.

Processes of ethical improvement, I therefore argue, are rooted not only in expressions of piety but also, importantly, emerge from responses to self-perceived setbacks and feelings of inability, weakness, and error. Thus, I have drawn into the analysis a notion of moral failure (cf. Beekers and Kloos 2018). Many pilgrims in Morocco identify and acknowledge the perception of moral failure, and, crucially, one's reaction to it, as part of the process of becoming a better Muslim. Within an acknowledgement of the notion of failure, and a willingness to learn from failures, pilgrims simultaneously speak of their hopes for future improvement of the self, and also subsequently may strive to lead more pious lives. Acknowledgements of moral failure and imperfection were seen by many pilgrims as contributing to, rather than obstructing and detracting from, personal projects of ethical improvement. Pilgrims were generally emphatic and asserted that they would try to change themselves for the better as they dealt with setback, doubts and conflicts.

Although within my thesis, I focused largely on those who have been successful in performing the pilgrimage and who return from Mecca to their everyday life, I would argue that it is also important to pay attention to the constraints in everyday life that prevent many other Moroccans from 'going there' and reaching Mecca. In Chapter Two, for example, I discussed the large numbers (hundreds of thousands) of Moroccans registering for Hajj every year, while the numbers selected are significantly smaller. This leaves people disappointed. The relationship between ordinary lives and piety comes to the fore here in the ways that people who experience such disappointment, more often

than not, voice this disappointment in religious terms, labelling their failure as 'destiny', it 'not yet being their time', or as 'hearing' God's call to visit His house in Mecca, but being unable to fulfill it. In addition to those not selected through the bureaucratic selection process, hundreds of poor Moroccans, who are unable to even apply for the Hajj, choose to perform local pilgrimage known in Morocco as the Pilgrimage of the Poor. In my research, I argued how such local practices form part of the rhythms of daily life, which adapt, respond, reshape and are reshaped by, the circumstances of both religious and other living conditions. I demonstrate that Moroccan pilgrims exercise individual religious agency, and how this enables them, some more than others, to negotiate the changes in their status as pilgrims among their community, or in their status as an aspirant pilgrim, unable to achieve her/his ambition through the usual route, but finding spiritual satisfactions in an alternative manner.

Openly acknowledging failure, and accommodating that failure within a religious context, in itself was sometimes described by Moroccans as a means of realizing and accepting the fact that humans are not perfect and that failure – and the admission of failure –is part of being a good Muslim in itself. Based on my fieldwork and taking into consideration the previously mentioned studies of ethical self-formation and everyday life, I have argued that processes of ethical improvement are based not only on expressions of piety but also, importantly, on self-perceived setbacks and on feelings of inability, weakness, and error, as discussed above. Thus, I have drawn into the analysis a notion of moral failure (cf. Beekers and Kloos 2018). Senses of failure are a crucial factor, therefore, in the constitution of religious agency.

I also examined how and when the Hajj became a topic of conversation, a contested category, or a framework for explaining social relations and particular events, a process which can be seen throughout this thesis. Through this process of careful mapping, we see how people, within their everyday life, make sense of the pilgrimage and embrace its central religious significance. For the majority of Moroccans who wish to perform the pilgrimage, Mecca is beyond reach. Their gender, financial

situation, health issues, or the quota and *qurʿa* systems, work not to their favor. In these cases, I show how the everyday is always open to contestations and innovations as mechanisms by which people manage their spiritual ambitions and religiosity. I show that, while Islamic scriptures clearly provide 'scripts', or authoritative reference points, releasing those who are unable to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca from that religious duty, the ways in which Muslim interpret their inability to perform the pilgrimage can vary widely. My work illustrates that such dramatic differences in opinion reflect the way people still struggle to accommodate such variations in religious practice and feel the lack of absolute religious knowledge or guidance to cater for the complexities of everyday life, and the blunt truth that not everyone has equal access to opportunities, the Hajj included.

In her lecture Buitelaar, "Comparing Notes: An Anthropological Approach to Contemporary Islam," Marjo Buitelaar emphasizes the importance of participant observation in gaining insights into the dynamic and complex ways in which religious concerns interact with other more material motivations, and she discusses "how religion may be brought to the fore in some settings, and is left unaddressed in others" (Buitelaar 2018).[328] Buitelaar argues that "the ethnographic mapping of the contextual presence of Islam in the everyday lives of Muslims is of crucial importance in the study of contemporary Islam." This position chimes with the findings of my own fieldwork and consequently my thesis follows this line of inquiry. Through my accounts of the eighteen months I spent with Moroccans, I provide insights into the many and varied ways in which the religious concerns are at times in the foreground and at other times recede in significance within people's lives. Participant observation allowed me to see situations where religion is very much foregrounded, but also where it does not occupy center stage in an obvious manner, but forms a backdrop of certain colors, metaphorically speaking, to daily life.

[328] See https://www.rug.nl/staff/m.w.buitelaar/inauguralmbcontemporaryislam.pdf

Particularly while thinking of Mecca and the pilgrimage in general, the tendency might be to concentrate on situations that might readily and obviously be conceived of as 'religious'. However, participant observation in the everyday lives of pilgrims allows access to study settings in which religion might not necessarily have a primary presence. I hope to have demonstrated in my thesis that this provides rich opportunities to study the religious within the mundane, an interesting and complex area of investigation. For example, in Chapter Nine, I examine musical genres in Morocco. I found that in some musical forms Mecca as a place and the Hajj as an experience take center stage. In the themes of those songs, one can perceive the importance of the pilgrimage and the idealization of Mecca as a place of perfection, formulations which, in return, stimulate feelings of happiness and provoke memories of Mecca among the listeners. Those same songs, nonetheless, are equally concerned with the struggles of everyday life, such as poverty, social discord. At times, they also deliver political messages as in the *Allah Yā Mawlānā* song, for example.

Since everyday life is complex and full of ambiguities, pilgrims, and Muslims in general, navigate multiple social and cultural settings and, when they do, they move between - and combine - religious and mundane moral registers. In this context, I illustrate how narratives function, and how storytelling is one means of dealing with ambiguity and delivering moral lessons to listeners. In Chapter Ten, for example, I discuss four short stories in which pilgrimage to Mecca is discussed. In addition to their giving a glimpse into the cultural and oral traditions in Morocco, the importance of those stories revolves around the fact that by citing the pilgrimage, they provide moral lessons that sometimes go beyond the religious teachings related to the Hajj, and have social messages related to wealth and class issues as well. In the story of the cobbler, for example, we see the dilemma of a man with savings; should he give them to his poor neighbor, or go to Hajj himself, using the money for the purpose he intended? When the cobbler chooses the charitable giving, we also see how he is then rewarded by God, in that people, in some miraculous form, saw him circulating the Kaʿba with them although

he never left for Mecca. The moral lesson of the story, I suggest, is about revealing important social norms we should observe. These include the importance of being good to one's neighbor, the importance of charity and, ultimately, for that particular storyteller, an acceptance of and reconciliation to the fact that she herself was unable to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. The narrative illustrates how, for Moroccans, being a Muslim intersects with other social identifications, for example one's status and responsibility as a neighbor, and reveals how adherents to the faith try to make sense of the complexities of everyday life. Such narratives illustrate that Mecca has, indeed, a powerful presence in everyday life, even when that presence is articulated through a channel which is non-religious and has ramifications within the realm of daily life and social morality.

As I have demonstrated in Chapter Five, another way in which this comes to the fore in Morocco is that, besides the religious impetus behind the journey for individual Muslims, normative authorization is clearly also political, and group pilgrimages may well be promoted by the Moroccan polity to reinforce nationalism or a sense of civic pride, quite a different impulse from the individual's devotional drive. The annual departure of the pilgrimage is an opportunity for the central government to assert its management of the process, and as already mentioned, an opportunity for the king to assert his authority. This conflation of religious and political motives also manifests itself in the Saudi measures regarding the Hajj governance in Chapter Six.

Indeed, I have demonstrated that many pilgrims feel an ever-increasing tension between the materialism of the modern age and the Hajj, manifested in luxurious accommodation for the elite, contrasting with the simplicity of the facilities being experienced by the majority. The photograph of the two women sitting on the side of the street in front of the advertisement for a new residential complex near the Grand Mosque of Mecca (page 231) in Chapter Six effectively encapsulates the two worlds of the modern Hajj that many Moroccans told me about during our conversations. These tensions are becoming ever more apparent and I would propose that another investigation might monitor how future

developments in Saudi policies impact the Hajj experiences of pilgrims and inform their understanding of Saudi control over the two sacred places to all Muslims.

However, I have also demonstrated that the pilgrims – using their own agency – act to work through tensions and to manipulate the imposed procedures. This came to the fore, for instance, in my observation described in Chapter Seven of the female pilgrims who insisted on visiting the tomb of the Prophet, and yet were prevented from seeing the tomb itself. In defiance of the Saudi regulations, the women voiced in loud ululations and extra prayers their satisfaction once they reached the Rawḍa. This suggests the strong impulse to exert influence on the changing circumstances, to subvert limitations and insist on agency when the conditions imposed seem at variance with one's own conceptions of core Islamic principles.

To sum up, an approach that focuses on the socio-cultural embeddedness of religion in everyday life provides a rich avenue of exploration and allows us to conclude that, depending on the specific circumstances in which pilgrims find themselves, there are always threads to be found with which to weave a tapestry to portray one's own view of conflicting events. No clear distinction can be made between nor can a hierarchical order be discerned between the 'everyday' and the devotional practices of 'ordinary' Muslims, those who strive for pious ethical subjectivities by participating in organized religious movements, and the understandings expressed in the diverse forms of textual and other scholarship.

EPILOGUE

Mecca in Morocco

In Morocco, the city of Ouarzazate, can be referred to as the 'mecca' of Morocco's film industry: the location of choice above all others since it has been used as the backdrop in so many international movies. In this city, renowned films like *Laurence of Arabia* (1962), *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), *The Jewel of the Nile* (1985) and *Gladiator* (1999) were filmed. Many visitors come to see the city's two major film production studios, their museum and numerous film sets. As for myself, I was interested in seeing the set for one particular film that was filmed there: *The Message* (1976). It was on the set in Ouarzazate that a fictionalized 'Mecca' was filmed.

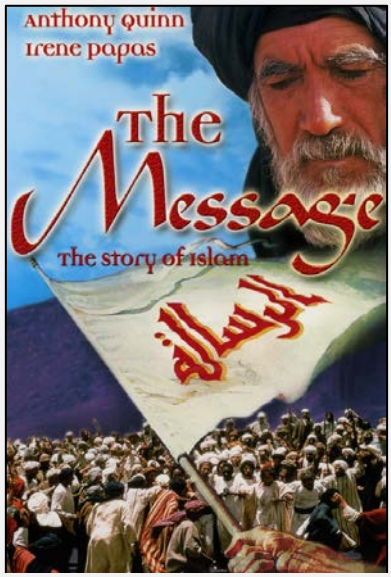


Figure 55: Poster of *The Message* film

The Message, originally known as *Muhammad, Messenger of God*, was a film familiar to me. I watched the Arabic version of the film *al-Risāla* numerous times as a child when the film was podcast on TV for religious occasions such as the *mawlid* (birth of the Prophet) and the Day of Arafat during the Hajj season. I never knew then where the film was shot until one day when I had a conversation with a Moroccan friend about Mecca.

"We have a Mecca here in Morocco too, do you know about it?" he asked.

"Do you mean the Pilgrimage of the Poor?" I asked, as that was the only reference I had in mind.

He said: "No! I mean a place where you find a Kaʿba, a mosque, and real desert, in Ouarzazate."

Some weeks later, a friend and I took a night bus from Casablanca to visit Ouarzazate and see the film location.

Walking inside the film studios was impressive, but it was outside in the desert that we needed to go to see where parts of *The Message* were filmed. I learned that visitors have to manage their own transport to these locations and since we had no car we had to walk. We walked for about thirty minutes in the desert to reach the first set which was meant to represent Jerusalem. Although this was not what I was seeking, I was happy to see familiar alleys, gates, and hallways, resembling those I knew from 'the real' Jerusalem. From there we walked for around thirty minutes before we saw a big black familiar structure; the Kaʿba! Once near I could tell that this Kaʿba was a wooden structure, covered in black tiles and decorated in white with verses from the Qurʾan. A few meters away was a semi-circular wall and a small stone with footprints duplicating what is said was an imprint of Abraham's feet near the Kaʿba in Mecca. From three sides, the Kaʿba was surrounded with walls replicating the rectangular central courtyard surrounded by covered prayer areas. Nearby, a structure of two small rooms, now, like the rest of the site, were also abandoned. So there it was, in Ouarzazate, Mecca in Morocco.[329]

Six months into the filming of *The Message*, however, the Moroccan government demanded the filming be stopped. The film was later continued in Libya with the permission of its government at the time. According to a Moroccan friend, an earthquake had hit Morocco during the year of the filming which was interpreted, by many Moroccans, as a sign from God that the filming of Mecca and the Prophet's life should not continue. In reality, however, there was a political dimension to the move as the Saudi government, which did not support the making of the film, exerted great pressure on the Moroccan government to stop the project. The contestation was mainly over the permissibility of visualizing what

[329] Fieldnotes 24/10/ 2016.

is held to be sacred, including filming the prophet Muhammed and his companions. The structure built at the filming site is still standing in the open at the original location as an evocative architectural remnant which has a certain interest in itself. It has become a site which people enjoy visiting, almost like an architectural ruin, but it also has other significance. In the pictures I took at the site, one can see some resemblance in the structure to that available in old photos of the Grand Mosque of Mecca with the Kaʿba at its center. For many people images of what Mecca looked like at the time of the Prophet are heavily informed by images in the film, which include – ironically – many Moroccan cultural traditional objects such as carpets, earthenware and other objects that were used to suggest a general oriental ambiance.

The remaining pages of this thesis give a visual glimpse of the presence of the pilgrimage to Mecca in the everyday life of Moroccans including material objects related to the Hajj, gifts and souvenirs pilgrims bring home from Mecca; they also show Mecca and the Hajj in newspapers, TV programs and advertisements, Hajj -related celebrations, and non-Moroccan pilgrims visiting Morocco on their way to Mecca. Visual references to the pilgrimage to Mecca constitute one aspect of the myriad ways in which Hajj permeates daily life in Morocco, offering avenues of exploration which proved to be too wide-ranging for this study, but which merit a brief mention.

Figure 56: Filming site of 'The Message' film. The scene of the kaʿba and mosque surrounding (top) and a view of *maqam* Abraham (bottom right) and a close-up Abraham's feet imprint on the stone (bottom left) (Ouarzazate, 24/10/2016).

Figure 57: Image of the Kaʿba (top) and below a close up of its upper section with Qurʾanic verse: "There are clear signs in it; it is the place where Abraham stood to pray; whoever enters it is safe. Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by people who are able to undertake it. Those who reject this [should know that] God has no need of anyone." (Qurʾan 3, 97) (Ouarzazate, 24/10/2016).

Portraits of ancestors as pilgrims

During my research in Morocco, I paid close attention to the settings where people socialized, including their houses, places of work and places of worship. In these places, I often noticed cherished objects, photographs and house decorations that refer to the Hajj, some of which I have referred to already in earlier chapters.

One recurring feature in Moroccan house decoration is the dominance of framed photographs and paintings of older generations of pilgrims who performed the Hajj. Today, pilgrims can take hundreds of photographs using their smart phones and share them, almost instantly, with their family members and loved ones. Only a couple of decades ago, however, since photography was forbidden in the Grand Mosque and the other major Hajj sites, those wishing to document their Hajj pilgrimage would have a photograph taken at a studio or in some cases a portrait painted either at home before leaving for Mecca or in Mecca itself. The next two pictures are examples of this tradition. The first picture is of the parents of one of my interlocutors. The picture was taken in Mecca and hangs in the living room as a remembrance of the deceased couple. The second picture is of the same respondent's parents-in-law. She believes that the painting was made prior to the departure of the couple to Hajj. The two pictures are placed in the same living room as a reminder of the couples and their pilgrimage. In Figure 58, one can note how the portraits are placed in the higher corners of the wall maybe suggesting that the pilgrims are already nearly ascending to Heaven. One can also notice the position of the hands in the bottom picture suggesting they are performing prayers of supplication.

Figure 58: Portraits of pilgrims in a painting (top) and a studio photo (bottom) (Fes, 03/05/2015).

Images as decorations and artefacts

Unlike other countries where I saw wall paintings and graffiti of the Hajj, such as Egypt, Palestine and Jordan (cf. Kruk and Oort 2015; Parker and Neal 2015; Mols and Buitelaar 2015), I could not identify pilgrimage-related murals on the homes of pilgrims in Morocco. However, most of the houses of Moroccans I visited had interior decorations that related to the Hajj.

I took the following three pictures (Figure 59) in the living room of the house of one of my respondents. The top image shows a large wall hanging of the Kaʿba surrounded by pilgrims. The two children in the same photograph are playing with a carton of sugar, a usual gift that guests carry when visiting people returning from Hajj or *ʿumra*. The next picture represents a framed imitation of the *kiswa*, the silk embroidered covering of the Kaʿba. Specifically, it depicts the part of *kiswa* that covers the door of the Kaʿba, with embroidery that includes verses from the Qurʾan. When I asked and was granted permission to take a photograph of the decoration, the owner emphasized that the size of the framed depiction of the *kiswa* matches the original one on the Kaʿba. The third picture is a framed image of the Prophet's mosque in Medina. I saw many similar pictures in the houses of people I visited, although not as frequently as pictures of the Kaʿba and the Grand Mosque of Mecca.. The frequency of certain images' depiction conveys a prioritized hierarchy of value and importance for pilgrims and for the faithful.

Putting up photos of Mecca and the Hajj is not limited to people's houses. I also saw pictures of Mecca and sometimes personal pictures taken in Mecca in people's workplaces. For example, a sweet shop in Marrakech (Figure 60) was decorated with several framed photographs: one the Grand Mosque of Mecca (left of photo) another of the Prophet's mosque in Medina and photos of the king of Morocco in the middle. I came across similar photos in shops in other Moroccan cities. Another example (Figure 61) shows poster of Mecca on a wall calendar I found at a money

exchange shop and a third example is a copy of the Qurʾan with Mecca illustration (Figure 62).

Figure 59: Living room in a house with wall hanging of the Kaʿba (top), a frame of the *kiswa* of the Kaʿba (down right) and the Mosque of the Prophet (down left) (Fes, 04/08/2015)

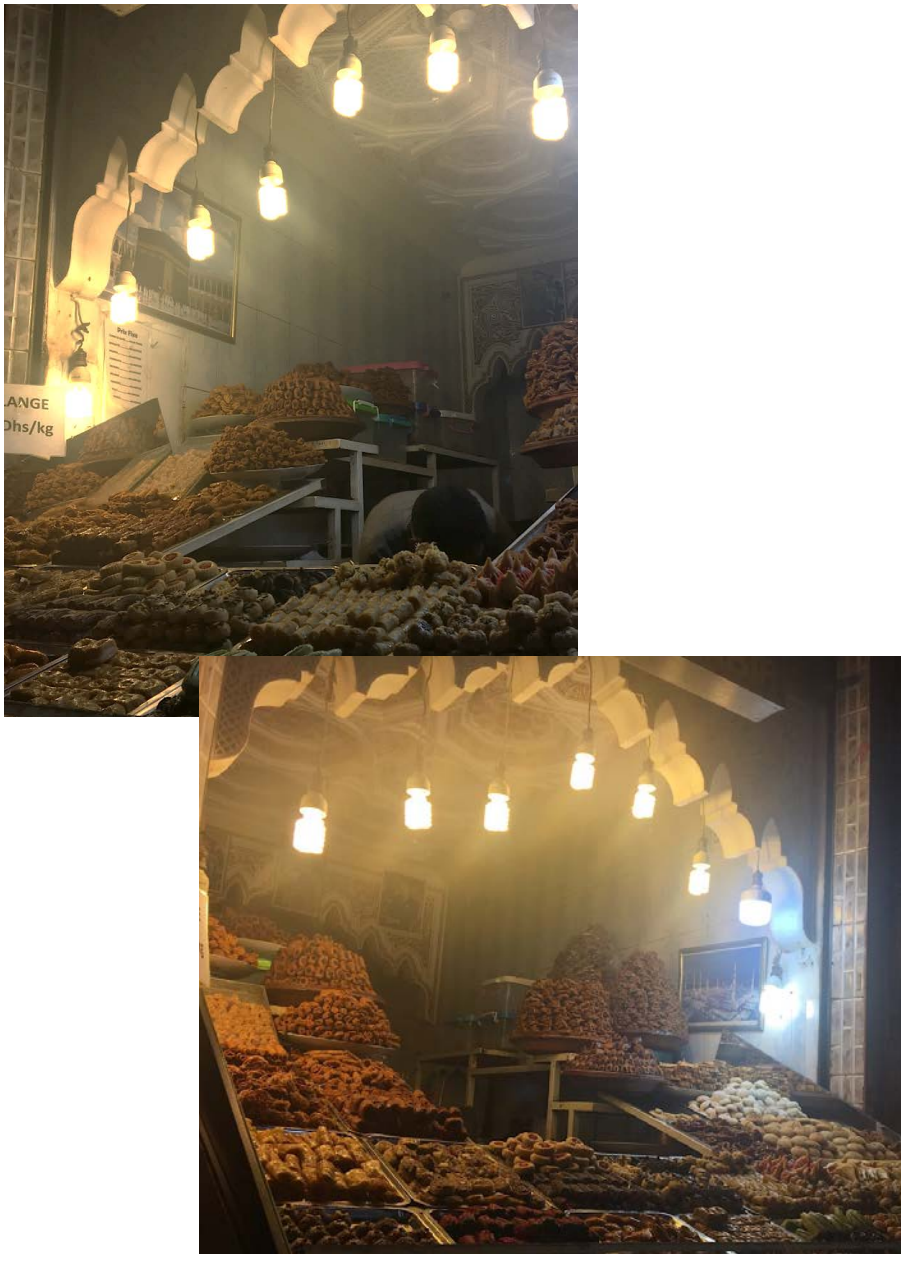


Figure 60: Moroccan sweets shop featuring pictures of the Kaʿba (above) and of the Prophet's mosque (as well as images of the king of Morocco) in the old *medina* of Marrakech (Marrakech, 25/11/2015).

Figure 61: Two wall calendars of the year 2019 at money-exchange shop (El Jadida, 23/03/2019)

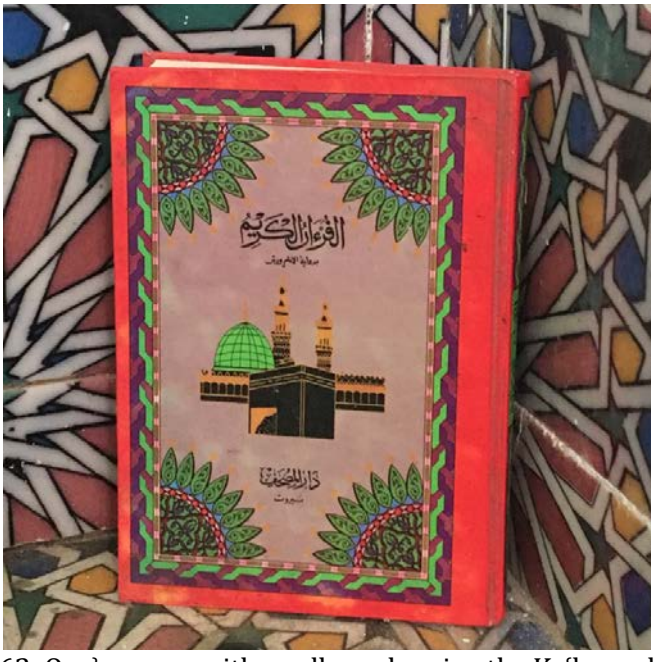


Figure 62: Qur'an copy with a collage showing the Ka'ba and wider Grand Mosque of Mecca, and the green-coloured dome of the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina (Tangier, 24/12/2016)

*Zāwiya*s and saint shrines

Another space where I saw images of Mecca and Medina in Morocco were the *zāwiya*s and saint shrines. As I mentioned in Chapter Eight, my research was not primarily concerned with saint veneration in Morocco (cf. Bazzaz 2010; Cornell 1998; Eickelman 1985; Gellner 1969). Nonetheless, I often accompanied Moroccan friends and people I visited to *zāwiya*s as an element of participating in their daily activities. Since *zāwiya*s are located in every city, I visited more than thirty *zāwiya*s and had the opportunity to speak to numerous people who visited these sites.

I had the chance to visit the *zāwiya* of Moulay Idriss I, for example, on the occasion of his birthday which is also celebrated widely in the town bearing his name. I also visited Sufi shrines to saints with my friends in Ouezzane, Safi, Tangier, Rabat, Fes, and Marrakech. These shrines were similar in several aspects, consisting of a room with the tomb of the saint, prayer rooms for men and women, and often a courtyard and a nearby graveyard for the saint's family and local residents.

These shrines often had many artefacts inside, including wall hangings related to the saint, prayers, framed written verses of the Qur'an, and images of the king and sometimes his father too. Almost without exception, the interior walls of the shrines would be decorated with pictures from Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Simiraly, I saw pictures of Mecca in every *zāwiya* I visited. Here, I restrict myself to providing examples from two places: *zāwiya* of Moulay Abdullah al-Sharif in Ouezzane (Figure 63) and the *Moulay* Abu Shuayb (Figure 64), the patron saint of Azemmour (cf. Cornell 1998, 57). At the shrine of the *Moulay* Abu Shuayb, for example I found seven different frames depicting the Kaʿba, Mecca, and Medina. Here, I share two of those, one of which depicts eight different sites which are significant for Muslims, most of which are located in either Mecca or Medina including The Mount of Mercy in

Mecca, The mosque of Two Qiblas, Mount Uhud and Quba' Mosque in Medina.[330]

Figure 63: Examples of wall hangings at the *zāwiya* of Moulay Abdullah al-Sharif including variety of framed photos around the room where he is buried (top right), a wall hanging of the Kaʿba near the entrance of the shrine (top left) and a second wall hanging depicting both Mecca and Medina (Ouezzane, 15/10/2016).

[330] Mosque of the Two Qiblas (*Majid l-Qiblatayn*) is s a mosque in Medina that is historically important for Muslims as the place where, after the Prophet received the command to change the *qiblah* (Direction of Prayer) from Jerusalem to Mecca, the entire congregation led by a companion changed direction in prayer. Mount Uhud (*jabal ʾuḥud*) is a mountain north of Medina which was the site of the second battle between Muslim and Meccan forces on 19 March 625 CE. The Quba Mosque (*Masjid Qubāʾ*) is a mosque in the outlying environs of Medina and was the first mosque to be built by Muslims.

Figure 64: Pictures from the shrine of *Moulay* Abu Shuayb (Azemmour, 23/11/2016)

The top images depict a painting of Mecca on top of the entrance door of the shrine. The bottom picture shows a framed photo of the Kaʿba (center top), Prophet's mosque (center bottom) and around it from left (starting top): The Mount of Mercy (Mecca), The mosque of Two Qiblas (Medina), Mount Uhud (Medina); from the right: Al-Aqsa Mosque (Jerusalem), Qubaʾ Mosque (Medina), al-Baqīʿ cemetery (Medina) in addition to the photograph of king Hassan II.

Mecca depicted in the public domain

It is readily understandable that images of places of devotion will be present in the homes of the faithful; however, their presence in the public domain conveys significance of a wider nature and reflects communal values and attitudes**.** One example concerns the many illustrations of Mecca and the Hajj on billboard advertisements. Those advertisements varied from ones announcing the Hajj registration process, to posters advertising *Hajj* and *ʿumra* packages, especially those for the month of Ramadan, and billboards of phone companies.

For example, a couple of months before pilgrims left for Mecca, several billboards around the cities advertised roaming options on Moroccan telephone networks that would allow pilgrims to keep in contact with their families in Morocco. Often, these billboards included a large image of the Kaʿba surrounded by pilgrims. Some advertisements featured people using a mobile phone next to the image of Mecca. The advertisement in Figure 65, for example, features a woman in white traditional attire holding a phone next to an accompanying message that informs pilgrims that they can receive calls without charges during the Hajj. On other occasions, I saw similar advertisements featuring the Kaʿba, a person supposedly in Mecca connecting with family in Morocco offering pre-paid sim card for pilgrims. Although those advertisements were meant to be current during the time of hajj, I still saw some of them for at least two months after the return of pilgrims in both 2015 and 2016. Some of these advertisements also target Moroccans going on *ʿumra* particularly before the month of Ramadan.

The advertisements were not always directed at pilgrims who were aiming to make their pilgrimage, as in the case of the phone companies; some draw on the allure of the Hajj to promote their products. One example is the advertisement in figure 66. The billboard in the picture features an advertisement for Western Union and a local Moroccan bank, where those who become customers would enter a lottery and fifteen of those people would be winners: the prize here is an *ʿumra* trip to Mecca. So, although the subject is related to banking services, the motivator as shown in the advertisement is those trips to

Mecca. Advertisers have but one aim: to sell. When targeting a specific audience, they will analyze the desires and priorities of their potential customers and shape their adverts to attract them, based on their understanding of the customers' needs. The proliferation of Hajj -related adverts reflects the cool and calculated assessment of advertisers that Hajj is a good selling point because of its centrality in daily life in Morocco in addition to middle class aspirations that include both the Hajj and other products such as phones and cars.

Figure 65: Billboard advertisement for 'Maroc telecom' mobile company (Casablanca, 21/08/2015).

Figure 66: Billboard advertisement for Western Union and Al-Barid Bank (Casablanca, 02/09/2015)

The advertisement announces the chance of winning one of fifteen *ʿumra* trips for those who receive their money transfers through Western Unions at Al-Barid Bank.

Gifts and souvenirs

So far I have touched upon pictures and paintings featuring Mecca and other Hajj sites. Once one starts paying attention to it, however, many other objects relating can be found in Moroccan homes. When someone decorates their home, they fill it with items and pictures that speak to them personally or that should express who they are; I saw much evidence that Moroccan Muslims choose to project their faith onto their homes by decorating them with emblems of the faith. These act as signs of devotion and, in some cases, they are thought to confer a spiritual blessing onto the home in and of themselves. When they return from Hajj or *ʿumra*, pilgrims bring back gifts such as head caps, prayer beads, scarves and representations of the holy places, Zamzam water and the famous sweet dates of Medina (cf. Al-Ajarma 2018; Mols and Buitelaar

2015; Porter 2012). In addition, pilgrims are often requested by their families and friends to bring back something as a blessing from either Mecca, Medina or both. Several pilgrims in Morocco told me that although they would bring general gifts for family members and friends, sometimes they were asked for specific objects to be brought back from Mecca. For example, one pilgrim told me that she was asked to bring a herbal plant, known in Morocco as 'Maryam' (Figure 67). The flower is believed to be a cure for women to strengthen the womb and during labour to reduce the pain. Maryam is not eaten; rather it is soaked in a bowl of warm water or sometimes in warm milk. This was a valuable gift to many of her friends who wanted to become mothers.

I also heard from people who have never been to Mecca but asked their pilgrim relatives for special gifts. One of my young interlocutors, for example, asked her father who went to Mecca to bring her back a necklace from Mecca to carry around her neck for *baraka* (Figure 67). The father answered her wish and brought her a gold chain with a pendant depicting the Kaʿba. Worried that she might lose the valuable necklace, she keeps it in a special box and wears it only for special occasions like family celebrations.

A third example of such gifts is one brought from Medina to specifically remind the receivers of such presents of the Prophet. One example was a piece of fabric depicting the Prophet's Mosque in Medina on which the *basmala* 'In the name of God the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' was imprinted on top, a hadith of the Prophet "Between my house and my pulpit lies a garden from the gardens of Paradise," in the middle, and towards the bottom the name of Medina '*al-madīna al-munawwarah'* (Figure 68).[331]

[331] '*Al-Madina al-Munawwara'* is often used by Muslims to describe Medina. The phrase means 'the lighted city' or 'the radiant city' (Figure 68).

Figure 67: Maryam flower (left) and Kaʿba necklace (right)
(Mohammedia, 21/08/2015)

Figure 68: Fabric depicting Prophet's mosque in Medina
(Fes, 09/09/2016)

Mecca's presence in the mass media: television

Watching TV is a regular practice which one cannot escape participating in when visiting or living with Moroccan families: mostly it took place at people's houses sometimes at their place of work. Around the time of the pilgrimage, TV programmes covered the departure and journey of Moroccan pilgrims, and their arrival in Mecca. Before the Hajj, several short adverts, some of which animated, were regularly podcast on national TV to guide pilgrims and give them advice on the correct behavior during the Hajj. Other programs were dedicated to discussing the importance of the Hajj and its rituals including a program called *min duʿāʾ al-ḥājjīj* [Prayers of Pilgrims] on Channel one.

What was interesting for me in those programs was that often viewers, regardless whether they had performed the Hajj or not, expressed their views on what was being said often leading to a discussion on the topic at the end of the program. During the actual days of the Hajj, I saw many Moroccans tune in to satellite TV channels which would podcast live from Mecca specifically on the Day of Arafat and the days of *ʿīd l-kbīr*.

The pilgrimage to Mecca was sometimes mentioned in contexts that were not religious or at least the major message or concern of the TV program podcasted not related to the pilgrimage. There were various occasions when this happened: here I share two examples. The first was in a TV program podcast on the second national channel 2M. The program, called *al-ḥbība ʾummī* [My beloved mother], tells stories of women who have been abandoned by their children or family members. In one episode telling the sad story of a woman abandoned in a home for the elderly, the woman mentions a final wish towards the end of the episode: to go on Hajj and then die (Figure 69). The audience then learns that she has been sent on a trip to Mecca as the episode ends with footage saying farewell to her companions at the institution where she lives and then footage of pilgrims surrounding the Kaʿba.

The second example is from a TV show *jazirat al-kanz* [Treasure Island]; the Moroccan version of Fort Boyard, a French game-show filmed on the fortress of the same name. In the specific episode, one of the

contestants was challenged to solve a riddle in order to win a key: the riddle's answer was *al-ḥājj,* a pilgrim. I translated the riddle under the figure below (Figure 70). As with other representations of hajj, the wide variety of styles and genres in which Hajj figures testifies to its prevalence in the minds of the population as well as the recognition of this fact by the makers of programs themselves.

Figure 69: A scene of Zahra being escorted out of the house on her way to leave for Mecca (Mohammedia, 12/10/2015)

Figure 70: A scene from the TV show *Jazirat Al Kanz* (Treasure Island). Translation of the riddle: "I ask you about a word that starts with the letter 'H'; 'H' is a person who did not travel until he asked for forgiveness; he boarded on an airplane which took him to the East. He left with one name and returned with two! How lucky he was!" The answer was '*al-ḥājj'* which is the second name to which the riddle points.

Printed media

During my fieldwork in Morocco, I followed the news of the pilgrimage on TV, radio, social media and printed media. Local newspapers covered the news of Moroccan pilgrims during the Hajj season on a daily basis. As the Hajj season was approaching, newspapers would already start publishing stories related to the Hajj. For example, *al-masāʾ*, daily evening news paper had once a coverage of the importance of the first ten days of the month of Dhū l-Ḥijja. The article covered how different scholars discussed the meanings of those holy days and featured two pictures, the first of a man reciting the Qurʾan and the other of the Kaʿba (Figure 71).

The second example presented in the next page (Figure 72), features a news report in '*as-ṣabāḥ*' daily morning newspaper. The report, containing a picture of a group of male pilgrims, covered a scandal affecting 100 pilgrims. The people in question were victims of a broker who took three million dirhams (around 300,000 Euro) in return for a promise that parliamentarians would help them in getting visas without going through the regular lottery system. The report stated the possibility of the involvement of government employees in this confidence trick.

The primary point to make about such newspaper reports is the salient position attributed to stories related to hajj. The selection of stories for coverage is the primary duty of the editor: she determines content. It is debatable whether the choice of content is dictated by a perception of the readership's priorities, or whether the news shapes such attitudes; but what is not debatable is the intricate connection between what is reported as news and the readership.


فضل الأيام العشرة من ذي الحجة

ابن تيمية يتحدث عن الأيام العشر

Firgue 71: Excerpts from the daily evening newspaper *al-masāʾ* on the importance of the first ten days of the month of Dhū l-Ḥijja (Fes, 16/09/2015).


نيران النصب على حجاج تقترب من البرلمان

الضابطة القضائية تفادت ذكر أسمائهم بالمحاضر وتحدثت عن موظفين مسؤولين بالمؤسسة التشريعية

Figure 72: News report in *al-ṣabāḥ* daily newspaper covering fraud on 100 pilgrims (Casablanca, 22/09/2016)

New Technology: social media, selfies and apps

Pilgrims take numerous pictures to document their pilgrimage, including selfies. Some of these pictures are personal, kept for memories of their experience in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, other pictures are shared –almost instantly- with family and friends back home. Many are posted on various communication platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Of all the pictures taken by pilgrims, 'selfies' seem to be the most frequently debated.

In an article on selfie-taking and sharing practices of Muslim pilgrims in Mecca, Caidi, Beazley, and Marquez introduce the concept of 'holy selfie' to refer to the selfies taken during the pilgrimage (Caidi, Beazley and Marquez 2018). Moroccan pilgrims have diverging views on the selfie culture. This is arguably a universal debate: the positioning of oneself in a specific (usually highly desirable) location, and the subsequent sharing of the image, serves several functions. It can be seen as a pleasing and innocent act of recording a special moment; it can be seen as vanity, a boast about one's travels or one's company; it can be seen as a distraction from the more important exercise of mindful presence in the place or situation, especially when that place is a holy one.

Social media platforms provide spaces where pilgrims can express their religious identities whilst performing the rites of the pilgrimage themselves. Moroccan pilgrims used social media platforms to document their experience, write about the procedures, and sometimes as a way to look for missing pilgrims as was the case in the 2015 Stampede.

The images in Figure 73 document some of the social media coverage of Hajj in Morocco the result of my being able to follow among people I knew during my fieldwork. People frequently, and universally, use social media to search for a missing person. What is noteworthy about these posts is the offering of prayers, intermingled with the more predictable good wishes for the safe return of the missing person. One person's posts may be read by possibly hundreds of people; therefore, the willingness to share prayers indicates a confidence in the reception

of that act, an assumption of a set of shared values and attitudes between a wide community.

July 18, 2018 *(a month after the end of Ramadan)* (*Translation*: Mr. Ait Said Mubarak is still missing in the holy lands since Ramadan 1438… His family is urging the Moroccans in Saudi Arabia to help in searching for him. Whoever has information can call the numbers below).

September 9, 2016 (*Translation*: Thank God! *Al- al-ḥājja* Raja [who was missing] has been found. We thank all those who helped in finding her. Thank God for her safety. (In a comment: Thanks to God and the members of the Moroccan community- in Saudi Arabia- the children of the pilgrim have been in touch with her; we thank all those who took an interest in this issue).

Figure 73: Examples of Facebook posts during the Hajj season of 2018 (left) and 2016 (right)

ʿId l-kbīr celebrations

Traditionally, *ʿīd l-kbīr* or *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* was the main occasion through which Muslims would connect to the Hajj rites. Before the time of TV and social media, celebrating *ʿīd l-kbīr* was the occasion par excellence in which Hajj was present in the daily life worlds of those who had stayed behind; in synch with the pilgrims there, they sacrifice an animal to commemorate the pilgrimage, for example. In Morocco, I attended the celebrations of this feast three times: 2015 in Fes, 2016 in Safi and 2018 in El Hoceima. Many aspects of the day of *ʿīd* were interesting to cover. In the pictures below I show two: *ʿīd* ritual prayers and evening celebrations.

For *ʿīd l-kbīr* prayers or *salat al-ʿīd*, people gather in the early morning of *ʿīd* in a designated open area called *muṣallā*, which may a square in front of central mosques, a school play ground or a soccer field may serve the same purpose (Figure 74). The *ʿīd* prayer is often held at sunrise, and includes a communal, nowadays amplified sermon, *khuṭba*, of around twenty minutes during which the imam reflects on the importance of the pilgrimage and at the same time criticizing 'un-Islamic practices' like music festivals. The sermon is concluded with *duʿāʾ* prayers after which people go home where they have breakfast and prepare for the slaughter of their sacrifice. There are, in fact, many interesting aspects about the Feast including both men and women performing the ritual of sacrifice and women offering slaughtering services for families who needed help.

Figure 74: Women gathering to perform *ʿīd l-kbīr* prayers
(Fes, 23/09/2015)

Abdellah Hammoudi, in his book *The Victim and Its Masks: An essay on Sacrifice and Masqurade in the Maghreb* (1993), discusses how women play a central role in purifying the sacrifice (1993, 91-92, 197). Hammoudi also noticed that the Feast of Sacrifice – in some communities - also includes a series of carnivalesque processions by wearing the skin of the sacrificial victim (Ibid, 16). During my fieldwork in Safi, I noticed how, in the evening of the day of *ʿīd*, after people have finished the slaughtering, prepared and eaten lunch, many leave their houses to greet others in the neighborhood. Then, young men in the neighborhood wear the skin of the sheep they slaughtered earlier, together with facial masks (figure 75). Hammoudi, following the resemblance of such celebrations to European forms of carnival, argues that these rites are part of the overall process by which Moroccans make Muslim sacrifice their own (Ibid). This tradition, which many local people compare to Halloween, is referred to as '*hargma*' in Safi and '*Bū julūd*', in reference to the skin, in other places. In the images below I show the celebration where masked youth in sheepskin play drums, sing, and dance with local people including children and women. I was told by the local people that this tradition was rooted in local Berber culture, that the performance was believed to be a blessing and the men in sheepskin were considered symbols of a good omen. The young men seemed to be performing this festivity for fun as well as for a small financial recompense. The assembled people often give the masked youth gifts of money in appreciation for their effort and as an *ʿīd* treat. In the images (Figure 75), one can see an interesting mix of the ancient and traditional, with the modern and alien. The masks worn by some of the youths resemble very closely the masks worn in the US at Halloween: thus, we see what looks like a mask of Frankenstein's Creature on one young man, and a mask based on Edvard Munch's painting 'The Scream' on another.

Figure 75: The celebration ritual of '*hirgma'* with youth dressed in sheep clothes (Safi, 12/09/2019)

'Zamzam'

In Safi where I spent the days of *ʿīd l-kbīr* in 2016, I witnessed an interesting ritual known locally as Zamzam. According to the local tradition, whoever woke up first on the second day of *ʿīd l-kbīr* should start throwing cold water on other house members. Then children and young people get out of their houses into the streets to start throwing water on every passer-by. The event also includes furious 'water battles,' which stay friendly and cause much laughter. Thus, an essentially religious occasion has developed into a community celebration and occasion for enjoyment, whilst maintaining the core idea of a blessing with the water of *Zamzam* (figures 76 and 77). In some cities, Moroccans call the tenth day of *Muharram*, Zamzam day. On this day, they spray water on each other. I witnessed a similar tradition of spraying water, but not in ʿĀshūrāʾ; it was on the second day of *ʿīd l-kbīr* from which occasion I provide some pictures.

Figure 76: Youth playing *Zamzam*, a water fight between friends and neighbours (Safi, 13/09/2016)

Figure 77: Youth playing *Zamzam*, a water fight between friends and neighbours (Safi, 13/09/2016)

African pilgrims in Morocco

Since the late nineteenth century, the *zāwiya* of Sīdī Ahmad al-Tījānī has been a sanctuary attracting Tijani and Sufi pilgrims, especially from West Africa who travel to Morocco in order to maintain the ties and relations between Fes and the West African Tijani centers (cf. Berriane 2015, 2012; Green 2018). [332] The *zāwiya* is also an important religious center where pilgrims pass through Fes on their way to Mecca which I observed during my fieldwork period. In Fes, I learned from a local vendor near the *zāwiya* that the travels of some pilgrims from Senegal integrate a stop-over in Morocco to combine the Hajj with a ziyāra in Fes (Figure 78). Those I met at the *zāwiya* were from Senegal. I learned that other pilgrims from Mali, Gabon and other countries come to the *zāwiya* to visit Sīdī Ahmad al-Tījānī before they leave to Hajj in Mecca.

The visiting women (Figure 79) were wearing traditional twilight blue boubous topped with a white scarf on which was printed the flag of Senegal in green, yellow and red colors, with the words '*El-Ḥaramayni Charefayn*' (The two Noble Sanctuaries) written across, and two black and white printed images, one of the Kaʿba and the other of the Prophet's Mosque of Medina as well as two phone numbers.[333] Each of the pilgrims also carried a small green bag with a printed image of the Kaʿba next to the flag of Senegal.

To conclude this visual overview of Mecca in Morocco, the following images show some of the Tijani pilgrims at the *zāwiya* in Fes.

[332] The z*āwiya* of Sīdī Ahmad al-Tījānī, located in the old medina quarter of the city of Fes, is the 'mother' *zāwiya* of the *Tidjaniyya* order, a Sufi order that was founded in the eighteenth century (1781/82) in Algeria by Ahmad al-Tījānī. When he settled in Fes in 1798, Ahmad al-Tījānī built a Sufi lodge (*zāwiya*) that became, after his death, his shrine. From Fes, the *Tijaniyya* teachings expanded throughout the region, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (cf. Berriane 2015).

[333] The Two Noble Sanctuaries (two Holy Mosques) refer to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām (the Grand Mosque) of Mecca and al-Masjid al-Nabāwī (the Prophet's Mosque) in Medina.

Figure 78: Inside the *zāwiya* (Fes, 05/09/2015)

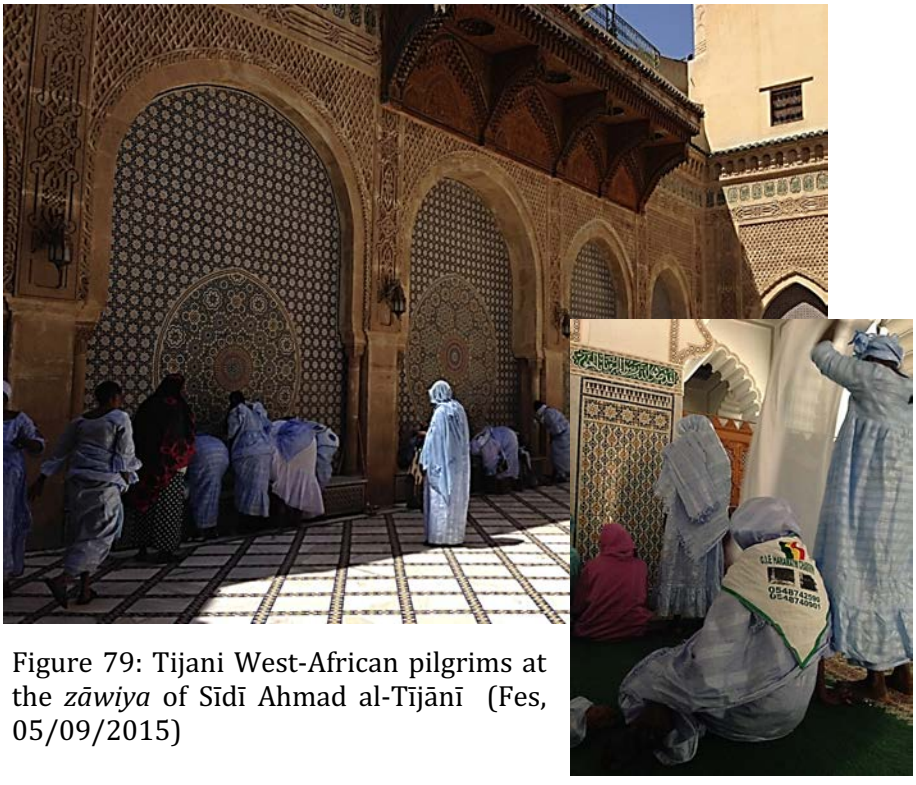


Figure 79: Tijani West-African pilgrims at the *zāwiya* of Sīdī Ahmad al-Tījānī (Fes, 05/09/2015)

GLOSSARY

***ʿAbāya*:** a simple, loose overgarment, essentially a robe-like dress**.**

***ʿāda*:** (pl.*ʿādat)*; customs, habits, and traditions observed by Muslims.

Amazigh: (pl. Imazighen) term referring to the original inhabitants of North Africa, also known as 'Berbers'.

Amīr al-Muʾminīn: Commander of the Faithful, one of the titles of the caliphs.

ʿArafat: the desert plain 15 miles east of Mecca. At its center is the Mount of Mercy (Jabal al-Rahma). It is here that the vigil known as wuqūf (standing) takes place from noon to sunset on the 9th Dhū l-Ḥijja. This is the high point of the Hajj. 'Arafat is where the prophet Muhammad gave his Farewell Sermon in 632, the year of his death.

ʿĀshūrāʾ: the tenth day of Muharram (first month in the Islamic calendar), on which imam Husayn was killed in the battle of Karbala, 680 C.E.

adhān (or ***athan***): the Islamic call to daily prayer.

Baraka: 'blessing' a quality or force emanating from God on objects or human beings.

bayʿa: oath of allegiance to a leader.

bidʿa: illicit innovation; act of innovation in religious matters.

The black stone : the large stone set into the south-eastern corner of the Kaʿba about four feet from the ground.

dārīja: Moroccan Arabic

dhikr: remembrance of God, repetition of the 99 names of God.

Dhū l-Ḥijja: the last lunar month of the Islamic calendar, during which the Hajj takes place, principally from the eighth to the tenth of the month.

duʿāʾ: prayers or supplications to God or revered figures in Islam.

ʿīd: festival or religious holiday. It may refer to ***ʿīd* l-Fiṭr** (Festival of Breaking the Fast), a religious holiday marking the end of Ramadan or ***ʿīd l-kbīr*** (the feast of sacrifice), the festival which marks the formal end of the Hajj and continues for a further three days. It takes place on the 10th of the month of Dhū l-Ḥijja. For Hajj pilgrims the *ʿīd* occurs while they are at Minā.

Fatwā: a legal opinion or a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority.

fiṭra: the state of purity and innocence Muslims believe all humans to be born with.

The Five Pillars of Islam: five principles that are central to Muslim belief: shahada, the Profession of Faith: 'there is no god but God, Muhammad is the prophet of God'; salat, the five prayers that are performed daily; zakat, the giving of alms; Ramadan, fasting during the 9th

Islamic month; the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

hadith: the traditions which relate to the life, sayings and actions of the prophet Muhammad. It refers to the complete body of traditions (The hadith) or to a single text (hadith).

Hajj: the pilgrimage to Mecca and one of the Five Pillars of Islam. It takes place between the 8th–12th of the month of hajj, Dhū l-Ḥijja, the last month of the Muslim calendar. The term for a person who undertakes the Hajj is a *ḥajj* or *ḥajji* (*al-ḥājj* in Moroccan Arabic) for a man and *al-ḥājj*a for a woman.

ḥajj mabrur: a phrase meaning 'congratulations on the Hajj ' is said on a pilgrim's return.

***Ḥaram* :** sanctuary; refers to the entire sanctuary area at Mecca. At the center is the Kaʿba which stands in an open space enclosed by porticoes. It also contains various other structures including the *maqām Ibrāhīm*, the hijr and the Zamzam well (see separate entries). The area immediately surrounding the Kaʿba is known as al-Masjid al-Ḥarām as it was once regarded as a mosque.

ḥalqa: literally 'circle'; traditional Moroccan folk theatre where the spectators gather in a circle around the performer(s) in public space.

ḥarām: religiously forbidden.

***halal*:** permissible to use of engage in, according to Islamic law.

Al-Ḥaramayn: the two sanctuaries. Refers to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām (Grand Mosque of Mecca) and the Prophet's Mosque (al-Masjid al-Nabāwī) at Medina.

***ḥijr* :** an area of particular sanctity within the Ḥaram on the north-western side of the Kaʿba. It is defined by a low semi-circular wall known as hatim and is identified in Muslim tradition as the burial place of Ishmael and Hagar.

***hijra*:** flight or emigration. Refers to the prophet Muhammad's departure from Mecca in 622 and gives its name to the Muslim lunar calendar. 622 is year 1 of the Islamic, hijri calendar.

hijri: see *hijra*

ḥikma: wisdom, philosophy; rationale or underlying reason.

***iḥrām*:** the state of purification that is entered into in order to be able to perform Hajj or *ʿumra*. The term also applies to the clothes that are worn during these rituals. For men this is two pieces of seamless white cloth, one fixed round the waist and the other covering the top of the body. Women's iḥrām consists of a modest dress which can be any colour, although many choose white. The iḥrām is donned at the *mīqat* which mark

the boundaries of the sacred area around Mecca (see ***mīqat***).

imam: religious leader or the prayer leader of a mosque.

***jamarāt*:** (sing. jamra meaning pile of stones). These are the three pillars in the valley of Minā close to Mecca which represent the three times that Satan attempted to tempt Abraham. On each occasion the angel Gabriel urged him to throw stones at Satan to demonstrate his refusal. Pilgrims throw 49 stones at the jamarat over several days which they will have collected at Muzdalifa. They are known as jamrat al-ʻAqaba (at the narrow pass of al-ʻAqaba, and the largest), al-jamra al-wusta (the middle one) and al-jamra al-sughra (the small one).

jellaba: a full loose garment (as of wool or cotton) with a hood and with sleeves and skirt of varying length originally worn chiefly in Morocco

Kaʿba: the cube-shaped structure (from Arabic kaʻb, cube), about 11m per side, with a flat roof and empty inside, positioned at the centre of the Ḥaram. Muslims believe that it was first built by Adam and rebuilt by Abraham (Ibrahim) and his son Ishmael. It is the direction (qibla) that Muslims face in their prayers wherever they are in the world. Also known as bayt-*Allāh* (the House of God).

qafṭān: a woman's long loose one-piece dress worn by Moroccan women.

***karāma**:* extraordinary favor or gift from God.

***Khādim al-Ḥaramayn*:** Servant or Custodian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries. A title first adopted by the Ottoman sultans and used by the rulers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

khuṭba: a sermon formally observed at the *ẓuhur* (noon) congregation prayer on Friday.

***kiswa*:** garment or robe; the outer black cloth placed over the Kaʿba which is replaced every year during hajj.

labbayk: short form of *Labbayk Alla-humma Labbayk*, a phrase meaning "I am here, God, I am here" or "At Your service, God, at Your service." Called the *talbiya*, this phrase is recited by those wishing to perform hajj, and also ritually at various points during the Hajj.

Maḥram: a male relative, usually described as being "within the forbidden limits" who accompanies a female pilgrim during Hajj.

Maliki: a follower of the school of legal thought of the jurist Malik ibn Anas (d. 179/796), one of four such schools in Sunni Islam.

***manasik*:** (sing. *mansak*) meaning ritual and often used to refer to the rituals of hajj.

maqam: literary meaning: 'place'; a sanctified space; often used to refer to holy places.

***maqām Ibrāhīm*:** the station or standing place of Abraham, close to the Kaʿba within the Grand Mosque of Mecca.

marbut: (marabout) (pl. *mrabet*) Muslim hermit or saint, specifically used in North and West Africa.

***mā-shāʾ-Allāh*:** what God has willed (expression of joy, praise, or awe).

mashriq: eastern part of the Arab world.

Masjid al-Ḥaram: see Ḥaram.

melhun: traditional Moroccan genre of sung poetry.

Minā: a valley about 5km (3 miles) east of the Kaʿba at Mecca where pilgrims go to on 8th Dhū l-Ḥijja where they camp overnight before going to 'Arafat.

***minbar*:** pulpit.

***mīqat*:** any one of five stations which are in a radius bordering the sacred territory of Mecca where pilgrims purify themselves and put on the iḥrām before going on Hajj or *ʿumra*. Also known as *mīqat makani* (fixed place). These are Dhū al-Ḥulayfa, close to Medina about 300km from Mecca; Juhfa, 190km to the north-west; Qarn al-Manazil, 90km to the east; Dhat Irq, 85km to the north-east and Yalamlan, 50km to the southeast.

miskīn: poor or unfortunate

***muftī*:** a religious scholar capable of giving qualified judgments or legal opinions, *fatwās,* on matters of Islamic jurisprudence.

mujāmala: courtesy. It refers to a visa that has been issued outside of the Protocol (quota) process.

musāmaḥa: literally 'forgiveness'. Refers to the act of seeking the forgiveness of relatives and friends before a pilgrim leaves to Mecca.

***mutawwaf*:** guide who helps the pilgrims perform the rituals of hajj, often from a local Meccan family.

Muzdalifa: a plain about 5.5km from 'Arafat where pilgrims will pick up the stones needed to stone the *jamarat*.

nashīd: (pl. anashīd) chanting, reciting, or melodic vocalizing. traditionally refers to vocal hymns without the use of melodic instruments.

niyya: right intention; an Islamic concept: the intention in one's heart to do an act for the sake of God

***qibla*:** the direction of prayer towards the Kaʿba at Mecca. qiblanama: an instrument which indicates the direction of Mecca.

qurʿa: a lottery system used in several Muslim countries to allocate the limited number of Hajj visas.

Qurʾan (Ar. al-Qurʾan) lit. 'Recitation'; the scripture of Islam, believed by Muslims to

have been revealed by God to the prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel, and regarded as immutable.

***riḥla*:** journey; refers to a genre of travel literature which includes Hajj narratives.

***ṣadaqa*:** charity or voluntary alms. In Morocco, it also refers to charity meal.

Ṣafā: one of two hills, the other being **Marwa**, within the Ḥaram at Mecca about 1,350m long between which Ishmael's mother, Hagar, is said to have run in search of water. The running is known as saʿī and the area in which the activity takes place is masʿa (the place of hurrying).

saʿī: the brisk running between the hillocks of Ṣafā and Marwa in Mecca, a constituent ritual of both Hajj and ʿUmra.

***salat*:** see Five Pillars of Islam.

Salafi: from Arabic salaf, '[pious] predecessors'; denotes a conservative, anti-clerical modernist strain of Islam, though it is often used uncarefully to describe any Muslim who espouses conservative religious views.

samaʿ: literally 'listening,' but also a form of mystical audition within Sufism, during ritual listening and reciting of Sufi poetry.

shaʿbi: popular festive music.

shahada: see Five Pillars of Islam.

sharīʿa: Islamic law.

sheikh: a tribal leader or elder.

Shiʿa: party or faction. Refers to the 'party of Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad. Shiʿites believe that the leadership of the Muslim community passed from Muhammad through Ali to his descendants. **Shiʿi** (n.+adj), **Shiʿa** (pl.)

shirk: the sin of polytheism or idolatry in Islam.

sharif: (pl. *shurafaʾ*, *shurfa* in Moroccan Arabic) noble, highborn, a title for people claiming genealogical descendance from a local saint, a charismatic figure or the Prophet himself.

sūra: a chapter or section of the Qurʾan.

sunna: recordings of the teachings, deeds and sayings of the prophet Muhammad, source of Islamic law.

***suq*:** market.

***sura*:** chapter; subdivision of the Qurʾan.

***talbiya*:** see *Labbayk*: acclamation; prayer that is chanted when pilgrims begin the Hajj or *ʿumra*. '*Labbayk allahumma labbayk* …' ('Here I am, Lord, responding to Your call [to perform the Hajj]. Praise belongs to You, all good things come from You and sovereignty is yours alone').

tarbiya: education

***ṭawāf*:** circumambulation; a key element of the Hajj rituals. Performed seven times around

the Kaʿba anti-clockwise, starting from the eastern corner in which the black stone is embedded. The ṭawāf al-wadaʿ, the farewell ṭawāf, is the last rite of hajj.

***ṭulba* (sing. *ṭalib*)**: refers to students of Qurʾan who are specialized in group recitation at ceremonies such as weddings and funirals

ʿulamaʾ (sing. ʿālim): those versed in the legacy of religious (revealed) knowledge.

***umma*:** the community of Muslims.

***ʿumra*:** the 'minor' or 'lesser' pilgrimage which can be performed at any time of year and only involves the rituals of *ṭawāf* and *saʿī*.

Wahhabi: an austere and conservative religious movement, revivalist when it was founded in the eighteenth century, associated with the Saudi political regime and juridical establishment. *Wahhabi* is sometimes (imprecisely) used interchangeably with *Salafi*. The term is derived from the name of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), whose followers reject this label and term themselves *muwahhidun* (strict monotheists).

walīma: a big meal prepared for special occasions including returning from Hajj and weddings ceremonies.

waqf: a pious or religious endowment, usually charitable, made by an individual; it is through *waqfs* that such establishments as mosques, law colleges, travelers' hostels, and way-stations are maintained.

***wuqūf*:** see 'Arafat. lit. 'standing'; a term applied to the vigil at ʿArafat.

Zamzam: the spring that emerged when Hagar was searching for water in the desert. It is believed to have appeared when Ishmael kicked his heel in the sand. The well is situated within the Ḥaram at Mecca. Pilgrims will often take *Zamzam* water home with them as a souvenir of hajj.

***zāwiya*:** a residential building where a Sufi scholar lived (and often died) and often used by Sufis. Sufi lodge, a term commonly used in North Africa.

***ziyāra*:** visit; often refers to visiting the tomb of the prophet Muhammad at Medina, or non-Hajj pilgrimage.

Appendix I

This section contains my translation of the full songs discussed in Chapter Nine. The songs are organized in the order in which I learned them and wrote them down in Morocco.

Amdaḥ nabawiyya	***أمداح نبوية***
Blessings of God be upon you,	الصلاة عليك
O Prophet Muhammad	يا النبي محمد
May God grant you peace,	صلى الله عليك
O prophet Muhammad	النبي محمد
Who is the One? O prophet Muhammad?	من هو واحد يا النبي محمد؟
The One is God, O prophet Muhammad!	واحد هو الله يا النبي محمد
Who are the two, O prophet Muhammad?	من هم اثنان يا النبي محمد؟
Hassan and Hussein, O prophet Muhammad!	الحسن والحسين يا النبي محمد
Blessings of God be upon you,	الصلاة عليك
O Prophet Muhammad	يا النبي محمد
May God grant you peace,	صلى الله عليك
O Prophet Muhammad	النبي محمد
Who are the three, O prophet Muhammad?	من هم ثلاثة يا النبي محمد؟
The owners of gardens, O prophet Muhammad!	اصحاب الروضة يا النبي محمد
Who are the four, O prophet Muhammad?	من هم أربعة يا النبي محمد؟
The four holy books, O prophet Muhammad![334]	اربع كتب يا النبي محمد
Who are the five, O prophet Muhammad?	من هم خمسة يا النبي محمد؟
Five prayers, O prophet Muhammad!	خمس صلوات يا النبي محمد
Blessings of God be upon you,	الصلاة عليك
O Prophet Muhammad	يا النبي محمد
May God grant you peace,	صلى الله عليك
O Prophet Muhammad	النبي محمد
Who are the six, O prophet Muhammad?	من هم ستة يا النبي محمد؟
The six days, O prophet Muhammad![335]	ستة أيام يا النبي محمد
Who are the seven, O prophet Muhammad?	من هم سبعة يا النبي محمد؟
Seven heavens, O prophet Muhammad!	سبع سماوات يا النبي محمد

[334] The four books mentioned by name in the Qur'an are the Tawrat revealed to Musa, the Zabur revealed to Dawud, the Injil revealed to Jesus, and the Qur'an revealed to Muhammad.

[335] Referring to the creation of the Earth and skies which is mentioned in Qur'an.

Who are the eight O prophet Muhammad?	من هم ثمان يا النبي محمد؟
The holders of the throne, O prophet Muhammad!	حملة العرش يا النبي محمد
Blessings of God be upon you,	الصلاة عليك
O prophet Muhammad	يا النبي محمد
May God grant you peace,	صلى الله عليك
O prophet Muhammad	النبي محمد
Who are the nine O prophet Muhammad?	من هم تسعة يا النبي محمد؟
The miracles of Moses, O prophet Muhammad!	آيات موسى يا النبي محمد
Who are ten? O prophet Muhammad?	من هم عشرة يا النبي محمد؟
The companions of the Prophet,	اصحاب النبي
O prophet Muhammad![336]	يا النبي محمد
Who are the eleven, O prophet Muhammad?	من هم احد عشر يا النبي محمد؟
The brothers of Joseph, O prophet Muhammad!	أخوة يوسف يا النبي محمد
Who are twelve, O prophet Muhammad?	من هم اثناعشر يا النبي محمد؟
The number of months, O prophet Muhammad.	عدد الشهور يا النبي محمد
Blessings of God be upon you,	الصلاة عليك
O prophet Muhammad	يا النبي محمد
May God grant you peace,	صلى الله عليك
O prophet Muhammad	النبي محمد
Rise up to praise God,	قوموا قوموا تمدحوا لله
O lovers of the Messenger of God;	يا العاشقين في رسول الله
This is an hour of God's,	هذي ساعة من ساعات الله
in which the the Messenger of God, is present	يحضر فيها النبي رسول الله
O visitors of Mecca and Medina,	يا زايرين مكة والمدينة
Ask the beloved of God for intercession;	قولوا لحبيب الله يشفع فينا
O visitors of Mecca and Medina,	يا الزايرين مكة والمدينة
Ask the beloved of God, to plead for us;	قولوا لحبيب الله يشفع فينا
Rise up to praise God,	قوموا قوموا تمدحوا لله
O lovers of the Messenger of God;	يا العاشقين في رسول الله
This is an hour of God's,	هذي ساعة من ساعات الله
in which the Messenger of God, is present	يحضر فيها النبي رسول الله

[336] In a hadith accepted by Sunni Muslims, a specified ten of the Prophet's companions were promised Paradise. Those companions named in this hadith are referred to by Sunnis as 'The Ten Promised Paradise' (cf. Sahih al-Tirmidhī, hadith 3747).

Blessings of God be upon you, O our Prophet	الصلاة عليك يا نبينا
Best of God's creation, O Muhammad	خير خلق الله يا محمد
Between Mecca and Medina,	بين مكة والمدينة
Ask the beloved of God for intercession;	قولوا لحبيب الله يشفع فينا
Between Mecca and Medina,	بين مكة والمدينة
Ask the beloved of God for intercession;	قولوا لحبيب الله يشفع فينا
Rise up to praise God,	قوموا قوموا تمدحوا لله
O lovers of the Messenger of God;	يا العاشقين في رسول الله
This is an hour of God's,	هذي ساعة من ساعات الله
in which the Messenger of God, is present	يحضر فيها النبي رسول الله
Between Mecca and Medina,	بين مكة والمدينة
The scent of frankincense	ريحة الجاوي
O Prophet, O Muhammad, O the *Arabi*	يا النبي يا محمد يا العربي
Rise up to praise God,	قوموا قوموا تمدحوا لله
O lovers of the Messenger of God;	يا العاشقين في رسول الله
This is an hour of God's,	هذي ساعة من ساعات الله
in which the Messenger of God, is present	يحضر فيها النبي رسول الله
O visitors of Mecca and Medina,	يا الزايرين مكة والمدينة
Ask the beloved of God for intercession;	قولوا لحبيب الله يشفع فينا
Rise up to praise God,	قوموا قوموا تمدحوا لله
O lovers of the Messenger of God;	يا العاشقين في رسول الله
This is an hour of God's,	هذي ساعة من ساعات الله
in which the Messenger of God, is present	يحضر فيها النبي رسول الله
In my dream I saw '*al-madanī*'[337]	أنا في منامي شفت المدني
And my mind was taken by his love;	والعقل خلاني في حبه فاني
Rise up to praise God,	قوموا قوموا تمدحوا لله
O lovers of the Messenger of God;	يا العاشقين في رسول الله
This is an hour of God's,	هذي ساعة من ساعات الله
in which the Messenger of God, is present	يحضر فيها النبي رسول الله
Let's visit him; Let's visit him;	هيا ونزوره، هيا ونزوره
Our Prophet is a shining light	سيدنا النبي شعشع نوره
God is the Greatest	الله أكبر
Let's visit him; Let's visit him;	هيا ونزوره، هيا ونزوره
Our Prophet is a shining light	سيد النبي شعشع نوره
God is the Greatest	الله أكبر
Mecca is a bride; Mecca is a bride;	مكة عروسة ، مكة عروسة
Covered with white silk;	وحجوبها بيض حرير
God is the Greatest	الله اكبر

[337] Al-madan*ī* means something or someone residing in Medina; a reference to Prophet Muhammad.

Let's visit him; Let's visit him;	هيا ونزوره، هيا ونزوره
Our Prophet is a shining light	سيدنا النبي شعشع نوره
God is the Greatest	الله أكبر
If we are hungry, if we are hungry	اذا جعنا ، اذا جعنا
from the food of God we will be satisfied;	من قوت ربي نشبع
God is the Greatest.	الله أكبر
Let's visit him; Let's visit him;	هيا ونزوره، هيا ونزوره
Our Prophet is a shining light	سيدنا النبي شعشع نوره
God is the Greatest	الله أكبر
If we are thirsty, if we are thirsty,	اذا عطشنا، اذا عطشنا
from the well of Zamzam we will drink,	من بير زمزم نشرب
God is the Greatest	الله اكبر
Let's visit him; Let's visit him;	هيا ونزوره، هيا ونزوره
Our Prophet is a shining light	سيدنا النبي شعشع نوره
God is the Greatest	الله اكبر
If we are tired, if we are tired,	اذا عيينا، اذا عيينا
We will ride on the camel;	فوق الجمال نركب
God is the Greatest	الله اكبر
Let's visit him; Let's visit him;	هيا ونزوره، هيا ونزوره
Our Prophet is a shining light	سيدنا النبي شعشع نوره
God is the Greatest	الله اكبر
Mecca is a bride; Mecca is a bride;	مكة عروسة، مكة عروسة
Covered with white silk;	وحجوبها بيض حرير
God is the Greatest	الله اكبر
Let's visit him; Let's visit him;	هيا ونزوره، هيا ونزوره
Our Prophet is a shining light	سيدنا النبي شعشع نوره
God is the Greatest	الله اكبر
Pray on the Messenger of God,	صلوا على رسول الله والحال اعزم
Those who do not will regret;	والله اللي ما صلى حتى يندم
Pray on the Messenger,	صلوا على زين البشرة ،
his companions were ten;	اصحابه عشرة
Pray a thousand times, we greet him	صلوا عليه الف مرة عليه نسلم
Pray on the Messenger of God,	صلوا على رسول الله والحال اعزم
Those who do not will regret;	والله اللي ما صلى حتى يندم
Pray on Muhammad, the light of prophets	صلوا على محمدي نور التمادي
He will plead for us on judgement day.	شفيعنا في الميعادي يوم المحشر
God, is *Mawlānā*	الله الله مولانا
God, is *Mawlānā*,	الله الله مولانا
May You forgive us	تعفو يا خالقي علينا

Al-ḥājja	***الحجة***
Stanza 1	القسم 1
We take refuge in your house...	زاوكنا فحماك
O be generous, O Muhammad, O *Ṭāha*	جود يا محمد يا طه
A sea of glory… of favour,	يا بحر التعظيم…
O messenger of God	والفضل يا رسول الله
My soul was taken away	هاض علي وحش الرسول
by longing for the Prophet;	ذاتي الفراق فناها
Between ice and fire	هاني بين الثلج و اللظى
my heart is resilient;	قلبي يا مقواه
The body is dead on the land of Fes	الكسدة في أرض فاس
known by God;	عالم بها مولاها
But the soul is in *Tayba* (Medina)… and my	الروح في طيبة الطيبة
brain is confused and spread	عقلي حار وتاه
My pain no doctor in life can heal	ضراري حتى طبيب ما داواها
Only the crown of messengers;	إلا تاج المرسلين
most well with goodness	من فاق بحسن بهاه
O birds in the sky; I ask you	أطيور السما دخيل
by '*sulka'* and those 'who read it'[338]	بالسلكة و من قراها
Lend me your winds	عيروا لي جنحانكم
to reach the Prophet and see him	نوصل طه ونراه
We take refuge in your house...	زاوكنا فحماك
O be generous, Muhammad, O *Ṭāha*	جود يا محمد يا طه
A sea of glory, of favour,	يا بحر التعظيم
O messenger of God	والفضل يا رسول الله
Stanza 2	*القسم 2*
We are safe by your side...	زاوكنا فحماك يا المختار
O, patron of creation	يا شافع الورى
Fountain of etiquette and secrets	ينبوع الآداب و لسرار
.obvious secrets	للسرار ظاهرة
Your description, O crown of virtue...	فوصافك يا تاج لبرار
The minds are confused	العقول حايرة
The eye of mercy...	يا عين الرحمة
Your status was up scaled	منازلك مولانا رقَّاها
God beyond heavens...	الإله فوق السماوات
Together O sword of God	قاطبة يا سيف الاله
Who knows in my life	أمن درى فحياتي
Your image I wish to see	صورتك بانْجالي نشفاها

[338] *Sulka* is an Amazigh expression that refers to group gatherings that aim at collective reciting of Qurʾan and making duʿāʾ.

To win the wish of learnedhip	نفوز بطيب المرام
A full moon shines in the sky	بدري يسطع فسماه
My celebrations and *mousims*.	عيادي و مواسمي
And I win the best happiness	و طيب سروري و نزاهة
My heart gains its light back.	يتنور قلبي يعود
And my gardens full of his fragrance	روضي عابق بشذاه
I will be happy up to my ancestors	نسعد آسيد لسياد
The wish of my soul is fulfilled	روحي تظفر بمناها
My eyes will be delighted with beauty... Your beauty I will see	و نمتع بصري فجمال حسنك و نشوف بهاه
We take refuge in your house...	زاوكنا فحماك
O be generous, Muhammad, O Ṭāha	جود يا محمد يا طه
A sea of glory, of favour,	يا بحر التعظيم والفضل
O messenger of God	يا رسول الله
Stanza 3	*القسم 3*
Who knows I may see you in my dream... While people are asleep	أمن درى واش نراك في النوم. والناس نايمة
And greet you… O master	عليك نسلم يا المعصوم
of those who transcend	يا سيد من سما
My disperse will be gathered by you...	يضحى شملي بيك ملموم
And my thirst will be quenched	نهنا من الظما
We come to you...	لعندك نسي
We will show off	فوقت المعشاري يتباهى
To Mecca of beauty...	لْمكة ذات الجمال
That won glory and dignity	من حازت عز وجاه
In *Rabigh* we enter the state of iḥrām... The way directed by our messenger, Ṭāha	في رابغ نحرم كيف آمر نبينا طه
We will recite *Talibiya* and perform *ṭawāf*...	نلبي و نطوف
The way worshipper a of God did	كيف طافوا عباد الله
And we will kiss the stone of happiness; Our wishes will be complete	ونقبل حجر الاسعاد المراغب نستوفاها
And from the well of *Zamzam* that we miss, we will be full with its waters	و نزيد بشوقي لْبير زمزم نروى من ماه
Between the Ṣafā and Marwa,	ما بين الصفا مع المروة
My soul will remain here	روحي ما أبقاها
We will plead to the Listener of prayers My aim is complete...	نتوسل لْسامع الدعاء مقصودي نوفاه
We take refuge in your house...	زاوكنا فحماك
O be generous, Muhammad, O Ṭāha	جود يا محمد يا طه
A sea of glory, of favour,	يا بحر التعظيم

O messenger of God	والفضل يا رسول الله
Stanza 4	القسم 4
To go to the pleasant mount of *Arafat*	نطلع لجبل عرفة المبهاج
And win protection	ونفوز بالنجا
To reach a high degree	ندرك مقام رفيع لدراج
In the light and darkness;	في الضي و الدجى
Immediately become known 'elhaj'	نتسمى في الحين بالحاج.
And our wishes become complete.	و يكمل الرجا
When the sun sets into the water	بعد تغيب الشمس على الكون و
…	تغرب في ماها
We walk to Minā;	نسيروا لمنى كل.
each pleased with their love	واحد فاني بهواه
In it for three days,	فيها ثلث أيام
It is nice and beautiful here	صايلة و ظريفة محلاها
We all leave together... And our performance	نتسلاوا جميع
is complete	والزهو تم دق خباه
We will gain the secrets	ننالوا الأسرار
And our wishes at the final stage	والمراغب عند المنتهى
We will come to Medina	و نقدموا لمدينة.
Honourable Messenger of God	المشرف رسول الله
All goodness is in Medina.	في المدينة كل خير
Those who see its beauty gain happiness	يسعد من شاف بهاها
In it the crown of prophets...	فيها تاج المرسلين
Who came for us	من جاء لينا نبّاه
We take refuge in your house	زاوكنا فحماك
O be generous, Muhammad, O Ṭāha	جود يا محمد يا طه
A sea of glory, of favour,	يا بحر التعظيم
O messenger of God	والفضل يا رسول الله
Stanza 5	القسم 5
I want to be a neighbour in Medina	فالمدينة باغي نجاور
She is full of light	حضرة منورة
In Medina we will be happy	فالمدينة يهنا الخاطر
We rest and heal	نرتاح و نبرا
In Medina, there is Ṭāha	فالمدينة طه الحاشر
The lover who visited heavens	الحبيب من سْرى
O Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
look how my soul is drowning with sins	شوف نفسي غرقت فخطاها
O Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
save the believer from the hands of his enemies	فك عبدك من يد عداه

O beloved of God,	أحبيب الله
my body is full sickness	والجوارح ذابت من داها
Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
be generous and heal my body and its parts	جود داوي جسمي وعضاه
Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
your secrets have no end	يا من سرارك ما تنتاها
Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
do not forget us	غيث مداحك لا تنساه
O beloved of God,	أحبيب الله.
your *shafāʿa* we seek	والشفاعة ليلك نسعاها
Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
we will be happy after sorrow	ساكني يهنا بعد شقاه
Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
who wrote this poem dedicated it to you	ناظم الحلة ليك هداها
Messenger of God,	أرسول الله.
Abdul-Hadi said	قال عبد الهادي فلغاه
Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
and greetings to those attending	والسلام لجمع الفقاها
Messenger of God,	أرسول الله
and the honourable ones	ولشراف أهل العز وجاه
We take refuge in your house...	زاوكنا فحماك
O be generous, O Muhammad, O Ṭāha	جود يا محمد يا طه
A sea of glory… of favour,	يا بحر التعظيم
O messenger of God	والفضل يا رسول الله

Allah Yā Mawlānā

الله يا مولانا

Allah O our Master!	الله يا مولانا
Allah, Allah, Allah, our Master	الله الله... يا الله مولانا
O Allah our Master!	الله يا مولانا
My condition is not hidden from You,	حالي ما يخفاك
O, The One, my Lord!	يا الواحد ربي
Praises to the Alive, the Eternal;	سبحان الحي الباقي
Praises to You, O God be generous to me	سبحانك يا إله جود عليا
Praises to the Alive, the Eternal;	سبحان الحي الباقي
Praises to You, O God be generous to me	سبحانك يا إله جود عليا
Allah O our Master!	الله يا مولانا
Allah, Allah, Allah, our Master	الله الله... يا الله مولانا
O Allah our Master!	الله يا مولانا
My condition is not hidden from You,	حالي ما يخفاك
O, The One, my Lord!	يا الواحد ربي
Thanks to You my rivers are full of water	بك عمرت السواقي

and in Your flowers, my bees are foraging	ونحلتي في نواورك مرعية
Thanks to You my rivers are full of water	بك عمرت السواقي
and in Your flowers, my bees are foraging	ونحلتي في نواورك مرعية
Allah O our Master!	الله يا مولانا
Allah, Allah, Allah, our Master	الله الله... يا الله مولانا
O Allah our Master!	الله يا مولانا
My condition is not hidden from You,	حالي ما يخفاك
Don't make me a sad person,	ولا تجعاني شاقـــي
We come (to Mecca) with sufism/praises	حرمة ودخيل عليك بالصوفية
Don't make me a sad person,	ولا تجعاني شاقـــي
We come (to Mecca) with sufism/praises	حرمة ودخيل عليك بالصوفية
Allah O our Master!	الله يا مولانا
Allah, Allah, Allah, our Master	الله الله... يا الله مولانا
O Allah our Master!	الله يا مولانا
My condition is not hidden from You,	حالي ما يخفاك
O, The One, my Lord!	يا الواحد ربي
The prophet, oh my neighbours,	النبي يا جيرانـــــي
If I have enough food,	لو صبت الزاد
I will walk to him tomorrow	من غدا نمشي
The prophet, oh my neighbours,	النبي يا جيرانـــــي
If I have enough food,	لو صبت الزاد
I will walk to him tomorrow	من غدا نمشي
Allah O our Master!	الله يا مولانا
Allah, Allah, Allah, our Master	الله الله... يا الله مولانا
O Allah our Master!	الله يا مولانا
My condition is not hidden from You,	حالي ما يخفاك
O, The One, my Lord!	يا الواحد ربي
I will see the light of my eyes	نشاهد نور عياني
Visit the Kaʿba,	ونطوف بالكعبة
circulate it and recite *talbiya*	نزورها ونلبي
I will see the light of my eyes	نشاهد نور عياني
Visit the Kaʿba,	ونطوف بالكعبة
circulate it and recite *talbiya*	نزورها ونلبي
Allah O our Master!	الله يا مولانا
Allah, Allah, Allah, our Master	الله الله... يا الله مولانا
O Allah our Master!	الله يا مولانا
My condition is not hidden from You,	حالي ما يخفاك
O, The One, my Lord!	يا الواحد ربي
O, People visited Muhammad;	الناس زارت محمـد
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
He resides in my heart	انـــا سكـــن لـــي فـــي قلبي
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله

I came to visit him, and to worship God	جيـت زايـــر ومعبـــد
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
The Prophet, the Arab Messenger	السيد الرسول العربي
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
Ask the angels, ask the soul!	سال الملايك سال الروح
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
Ask the angels carrying the throne!	سأل حمال العرشي
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
Ask the guardians of the inscriptions	ســـال حفظـــة اللـــوح
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
My heart is attached to the *Qurashi*	قلبـي مولـع بالقرشي
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
Who would blame me?	من لايمني فهذي الحالة
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
I will sell to those	أنبيـع له
who would buy what I have;	يشري منـي
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
I will sell as a needy person would,	أنبيع له بيع المحتـاج
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
Those who tried would understand me	واللي جـرب يعذرني
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
Like I have fallen into a will	بيع من طاح في بير
Allah, Allah, Allah,	الله الله الله
It is hard to get out!	صعاب عنو طلعو
Allah O our Master!	الله يا مولانا
Allah, Allah, Allah, our Master	الله الله... يا الله مولانا
O Allah our Master!	الله يا مولانا
My condition is not hidden from You,	حالي ما يخفاك
O, The One, my Lord!	يا الواحد ربي
Enough crying, O my eyes	يكفيك دل البكاء ياعيني
Enough sadness;	يكفاك هم الحال
Playing tricked me and left me,	الظرف غشمني ولاحني
My hopes were gone	ما بقى لي أمال
O those asking me,	لله يا للي تسألني
do not demand the impossible!	مطلبش المحال
My story is evident on my forehead	قصتي واضحة في جبيني
No more earthly desire would distract me	ما بقت رغبة تلهيني
I count on parting;	على الفراق عوال
I count on leaving;	على الفراق عوال

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Summary

Mecca in Morocco: Articulations of the Muslim pilgrimage (Hajj) in Moroccan everyday life

This PhD thesis concerns the ways in which the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, the Hajj, is embedded in Moroccan society. Approaching pilgrimage from the perspective of lived religion, the overarching question is: *How does Hajj feature in the everyday lives of Moroccans and how are Moroccan views on Hajj are negotiated in pilgrims' micro-practices?*

To investigate this central question, I spent a total of eighteen months in Morocco between the Summer of 2015 and the Winter of 2017. I participated in the daily lives of Moroccans across the full spectrum of life's rich tapestry: I observed their actions, listened to their stories, and interacted with them in their homes, places of work and of leisure. I joined people who had performed the pilgrimage during their daily chores, in their shopping trips, and also in weddings and birthday celebrations. I followed the pilgrimage application process and the preparations of pilgrims before embarking on their Hajj journey. I accompanied families to the airport as they paid farewell to departing pilgrims and as they welcomed them back upon their return. My conversations were many and varied on all of these aforementioned occasions, often discussing at length their experiences in Mecca and the rich ramifications of the pilgrimage. In total, I spent three Hajj seasons in Morocco and witnessed the rituals that took place every day paying great attention to the time period around the season of the Hajj.

The red thread that runs through this thesis is the argument that although the Hajj is performed in a place far away from Morocco, taking Moroccans out of their daily life worlds, the practices, experiences and the meanings that they attach to Hajj are shaped by, and in turn go on to shape, their life and world upon return. In the various parts in the thesis I demonstrate from different perspectives how the everyday Moroccan

context shapes pilgrims' perceptions of their experience in Mecca and, in return, how after having completed Hajj they position themselves and are positioned as members of their community. Particularly important are the myriad ways in which the experience of being a *ḥājj/ ḥājja* shapes their everyday life, social relations and micro-practices. I discuss how memories of the Hajj experience and the visits to Mecca and Medina permeate everyday life for returning pilgrims, influencing their actions, values and attitudes, as well as their sense of Moroccan identity, serving as a major reference point for their personal and social identifications.

The first empirical part in the thesis begins with mapping the journey of the Hajj, from the time an individual Muslim forms the intention to perform this religious duty, through the application procedure and the varied additional religious and mundane procedures involved in the process. I describe how pilgrims prepare for the journey of the Hajj, what they hope to accomplish during and after the Hajj and, ultimately, I examine how they respond to what they encounter during the pilgrimage. I discuss their narrations on the very act of participation in the Hajj and the meanings they associate with their experience as individuals, as Muslims, as Moroccans and, in some cases as women. I demonstrate how the experience is often accessed and reflected upon after the event through the senses and the emotions, becoming the subject of long conversations in both private and public spheres

The Hajj experience is related first and foremost to the rites that are carried out at several important places in Mecca and Medina. However, in order to actually being able to embark on the Hajj Moroccans have to deal with two different political authorities on whom they depend to realize their desire to travel to Mecca: those of Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the link between religious and macro-political aspects of the Hajj are discussed in the second part of the thesis. I demonstrate how in Morocco, the pilgrimage may operate as an identifier of national citizenship, both in the experience of pilgrims themselves, and at the state level. In its capacity of custodian of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the Saudi state, through their Hajj management, has the power to

organize and influence the experience of pilgrims in Mecca in line with their own political and religious agenda. In the second part, therefore, I show how on the basis of their class and gender relations in Moroccan society, Moroccan pilgrims position themselves in relation to the larger Muslim community and as citizens of the Moroccan nation-state.

In the third empirical part of the thesis, I address how making sense of the religious obligation to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca while living in circumstances which hamper if not preclude its realization, Moroccans integrate the subject of Hajj in many aspects of their social life through cultural productions such as songs, storytelling, and media among others. Through these domains, I argue, Moroccans figuratively bring the holy sites of Mecca (and Medina), to Morocco. I demonstrate how the feelings they evoke related to the pilgrimage often operate as a means to nurture one's sense of a moral self as a Moroccan Muslim.

The chapters of this thesis are organized as follows:

The thesis begins with a prologue tracing my own journey towards studying the Hajj, followed by an introductory section explaining the main questions and goals of the study and a brief introduction to the pilgrimage to Mecca and the rites of hajj. Then, it maps the Hajj in relation to its historical practice in Morocco leading to present day.

Chapter One of the thesis presents the theoretical and methodological frameworks that have informed the research. I first provide a general overview of the anthropological framework of pilgrimage and then situate my own research in current anthropological debates about the study of pilgrimage, Islam and 'lived religion'. The second part of this chapter presents the research site and the 'story' of my research including the methodological narrative, questions of the ethnographer's positioning and reflections on fieldwork and multi-sited ethnography.

The main body of the thesis consists of three empirical parts, each featuring three chapters. Chapters Two, three, and four are organized in the chronological sequence of what pilgrims experience and do before,

during and following hajj. The chapters therefore reflect the ways in which pilgrims attach meanings to each stage of the Hajj experience. Chapter Two looks at the procedures that take place before pilgrims depart on the pilgrimage journey. It examines the meanings aspirant pilgrims attach to their pilgrimage, their expectations and motivations. The chapter shows how these meanings are integrated into personal and group activities and rites, including the *qurʿa*, a term meaning *draw*, which determines who will perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. Application for the Hajj itself requires mobilization of financial resources as well as personal management of procedures. This period is characterized by great uncertainty, various emotional states, and negotiations between those who are selected in the draw and those who are not; I also discuss the options and experiences of a third category of Moroccans who negotiate the possibility of going to the Hajj despite having failed in the draw. I suggest that both administrative and religious activities that take place before the Hajj contribute to the construction of the religious experience.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the pilgrims' experiences in Mecca. Looking at the Hajj as a sensory experience, I reflect on how upon return pilgrims speak about their time in Mecca. I argue that in the narratives of pilgrims, such memories tend to be described mostly through references to the five senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, engaging in a process which helps pilgrims to live – or re-live - the experience and enhance the emotional significance of the Hajj. I argue that pilgrims express their sensorial experiences not only to describe their Hajj journey to others but also to relive and re-experience their encounters in Mecca at a later date. Linking chapter three to chapter four, I show how Moroccans actively engage the memories of their pilgrimage trip and their relationship with the holy places like the Kaʿba or the Grand Mosque of Mecca, as well as with other places and people they encounter during their pilgrimage to tap into the power of their Hajj experiences to reinvigorate their daily and religious lives in Morocco.

Chapter Four reflects on the lives of pilgrims once they have returned to Morocco after their Hajj performance. In this chapter, I ask how the pilgrimage to Mecca influences the everyday life of pilgrims in relation to their personal religious and social practices and how they are viewed and treated within their local community. I discuss the expectations of family, social circles and wider community members and their demands on pilgrims. This chapter reflects on the social embeddedness of the Hajj in the lives of Moroccans and the various ways Moroccans reflect on those who have the status of a *ḥājj* or *ḥājja*. It portrays the relationships as being shaped through social interaction as well as through changes in the persons themselves and their personal identification as pilgrims.

In Chapters Fve, Six, and Seven, the focus shifts to specific questions regarding the Hajj and various layers of identity politics and power relations. Chapter Five continues with the question of identity formation and looks specifically at the Hajj as a maker and marker of national identity. Even though the pilgrimage to Mecca is an opportunity for Muslims to transcend state barriers, I demonstrate that Moroccan pilgrims' identification with their home country and their sense of national belonging intensify during and after the Hajj as a result of the experiences and people that they encounter in Mecca. I argue that this experience is not exclusively shaped by the pilgrims themselves but also by media narratives and national discourses in which the pilgrimage is used as an occasion for national political mobilization by the government of Morocco.

While in Chapter Five I reflect on national identification and political issues related to the Moroccan state, in Chapter Six I explore how Moroccans reflect on the pilgrimage experience in relation to the Saudi control over and management of the Hajj procedure. Moroccan views on the modernization of the pilgrimage to Mecca, on Saudi regulations concerning the actual performance of the various Hajj rites, and on the political authority which the Saudi state exercises over millions of Muslims who travel to Mecca every year are discussed, thus zooming in on tensions between global Muslim citizenship and national citizenship.

Conceptions of Muslim and national citizenship intersect with social class, gender and age. In Chapter Seven I therefore examine the role of Hajj in relation to the agency of women of different ages and social classes, more specifically to their physical and social mobility. While more female pilgrims are able to perform the pilgrimage today than in the past, women continue to face more challenges before they are able to embark on the pilgrimage to Mecca than their male counterparts. In addition to having to deal with the regulations of the above political authorities, a would-be female pilgrim needs to have the support and facilitating presence of a male authority figure, usually a close family member. I discuss how women of different ages and social backgrounds negotiate these modes of control and demonstrate how the pilgrimage itself is an opportunity to gain social recognition and increased religious and social capital.

In chapters eight, nine, and ten, I focus on how Mecca and the Hajj feature in Moroccan everyday cultural life. Chapter Eight focuses on a form of local pilgrimage known in Morocco as *Hajj al-miskīn* 'the pilgrimage of the poor'. Here, I show how people who are unable to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca try to find local alternatives where they carry out similar rites to those taking place in and near Mecca. I follow Moroccan pilgrims at two sites where a pilgrimage of the poor is performed and discuss how they connect it to the pilgrimage that is simultaneously taking place in Mecca. I zoom in on the religious, social, and political significance of such local pilgrimage in the reasoning of the pilgrims themselves. I also reflect on how these local pilgrimage sites become an issue of contestation among other Moroccans who recognize only Mecca (as well as Medina and Jerusalem) as valid and 'authentic' sites of pilgrimage.

Chapters Nine and Ten interlink by sharpening the focus on some specific aspects of Moroccan cultural life and illustrate how pilgrimage becomes part of the everyday life within specific cultural expressions such as stories and songs. Chapter Nine moves to the social and cultural embeddedness of the Hajj in everyday Moroccan life by looking at

popular songs and how Hajj is presented in those songs. In Morocco, different genres of music are popular and the lyrics of those songs are informative of the significance of the pilgrimage to Moroccans. I describe how these songs are played and performed in various settings and argue that for those who listen to them, they are a reminder of the Hajj, they bring joy to the listeners, and contribute to their connection with an important place, Mecca.

In Chapter Ten, I continue the discussion of the cultural embeddedness of the Hajj in the preceding chapter and examine references to it in forms of storytelling. In various settings, Moroccans tell stories featuring the Hajj, sometimes presenting it as a marker of morality and other times as a reward, a sign of God's acceptance, or as a reflection on other Muslim practices. This chapter shows how the Hajj is interwoven in narratives Moroccans share at the micro-level. I argue that these stories give meaning to the lives of the narrators and construct their religious and moral identifications.

In the Conclusion I return to the research question outlined above and reflect on the implications of my findings. I discuss the significance of the pilgrimage to Mecca beyond the rites performance of the pilgrimage itself. I point to the relevance of taking into account that while the pilgrimage is a journey to and through sacred space, it usually also includes a journey *back* or *away* from that space. As pilgrims return home following their contact with the sacred, they inevitably carry some new quality or moral, spiritual, or even material capital -as part of their pilgrimage experience. In other words, while the pilgrimage takes place outside their daily life worlds, it is firmly embedded in the everyday lives of Moroccans. Pilgrims strive to live up to their new title of *al-ḥājj/al-ḥājja,* titles which come with prestige but, at the same time, are laden with the responsibility of being 'faithful' to the new status of a pilgrim. Processes of ethical improvement, I argue, are rooted not only in expressions of piety but also, importantly, emerge from responses to self-perceived setbacks and feelings of inability, weakness, and error. Thus, I argue that it is important to study the everyday lives of pilgrimage taking

into consideration issues of moral failure which can also be seen as part the process of becoming a better Muslim. Pilgrims are generally emphatic and assert that they try to change themselves for the better as they deal with setback, doubts and conflicts. An approach that focuses on the socio-cultural embeddedness of religion in everyday life is therefore a rich avenue of exploration and allows us to conclude that, depending on the specific circumstances in which pilgrims find themselves during the Hajj, there is always a thread through which the pilgrimage gets interwoven with other, sometimes conflicting domains and 'grand schemes' in their daily life worlds.

In the epilogue following the conclusion, I aim to connect the reader not only narratively but also visually with this research. The epilogue explores the visual nature of the Hajj and how Mecca and the pilgrimage are represented in the visual domain, thus becoming part of everyday life in Morocco.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Mekka in Marokko: de bedevaart naar Mekka in het leven van alle dag van Marokkaanse moslims

Dit proefschrift bespreekt hoe de bedevaart naar Mekka, de Hajj, is ingebed in de hedendaagse Marokkaanse samenleving. Met als uitgangspunt het perspectief op pelgrimage als een vorm van 'lived religion', luidt de centrale onderzoeksvraag: *Hoe figureert de Hajj in het dagelijks leven van Marokkanen en hoe komen Marokkaanse concepties van de Hajj tot uitdrukking in de praktijken van alledag van pelgrims?*

Om deze vraag te kunnen beantwoorden, verbleef ik tussen 2015 en 2017 in totaal achttien maanden in Marokko voor etnografisch veldwerk. Ik nam deel aan vrijwel alle aspecten van het dagelijks leven van Marokkanen: ik observeerde hun activiteiten, luisterde naar hun verhalen, logeerde bij ze thuis, bezocht ze op hun werkplek of deed mee aan hun activiteiten tijdens hun vrije tijd. Mensen die de bedevaart hadden volbracht, volgde ik tijdens hun dagelijkse bezigheden; van boodschappen doen tot het bijwonen van bruiloften of verjaardagsfeesten. Van nabij nam ik de aanvraagprocedure van een Hajj-visum en voorbereidingen die pelgrims treffen voordat ze op bedevaart gaan mee, en ik vergezelde families die op het vliegveld afscheid namen van pelgrims en hen na voltooiing van de bedevaart een paar weken later daar weer verwelkomden. Bij al deze gelegenheden voerde ik vele, zeer gevarieerde gesprekken met mensen. Vaak waren dat intensieve gesprekken over de vele dimensies van wat de Hajj betekent in het leven van mijn gesprekspartners. Alles bij elkaar maakte ik drie Hajj-seizoenen in Marokko mee, hetgeen me in staat stelde om nauwgezet de uiteenlopende activiteiten en rituelen rond de bedevaart te observeren.

Het betoog dat als een rode draad door het proefschrift loopt is dat hoewel de Hajj plaatsvindt op een plek die ver verwijderd is van Marokko, en dus buiten het dagelijkse bestaan van pelgrims, de praktijken, ervaringen en betekenissen die zij toekennen aan de

bedevaart mede gevormd worden door hun dagelijkse leefwereld en dat deze betekenissen op hun beurt vormgeven aan dat dagelijks bestaan. Op uiteenlopende plekken in dit proefschrift laat ik vanuit verschillende invalshoeken zien hoe de dagelijkse Marokkaanse context vormgeeft aan de manier waarop pelgrims hun ervaringen duiden, en, andersom, hoe pelgrims die de Hajj hebben volbracht zichzelf positioneren en gepositioneerd worden binnen de verschillende netwerken waarvan zij deel uitmaken. De nadruk in het proefschrift ligt dus specifiek op de uiteenlopende manieren waarop de ervaringen en status die de eretitel van *ḥājj/ ḥājja* met zich meebrengt een stempel drukken op sociale relaties en dagelijkse bezigheden van mensen die bedevaart hebben volbracht. Ik bespreek hoe de herinneringen aan de Hajj en aan Mekka en Medina hun manier van doen, de waarden en houdingen, en identificatie van Marokkaanse pelgrims als Marokkaans staatsburger beïnvloeden. Hoe, met andere woorden, de beleving van de Hajj als referentiepunt fungeert voor de persoonlijke en sociale identiteit van pelgrims uit Marokko.

In het eerste empirische deel van het proefschrift schets ik de stappen van de bedevaart vanaf het moment dat een pelgrim de intentie formuleert om deze rituele verplichting uit te voeren, via de aanvraagprocedure voor een visum en verschillende andere praktische en religieuze zaken die daar bij komen kijken. Ik beschrijf hoe pelgrims zich voorbereiden op de Hajj en wat zij middels hun bedevaart hopen te bewerkstelligen, en uiteindelijk hoe zij omgaan met wat ze tijdens de bedevaart meemaken. Ik bespreek hun vertellingen over het uitvoeren van de Hajj en de betekenissen die zij toekennen aan hun ervaringen als moslim, als Marokkaan, en waar het vrouwelijke pelgrims betreft, als vrouw. Ik toon aan hoe zij hun ervaringen veelal uitdrukken en herinneren door middel van verhalen die zij zowel in privé settings als in het publieke domein veelvuldig vertellen over hun zintuigelijke waarnemingen en emoties.

De Hajj ervaring is uiteraard op de eerste plaats gericht op de riten die uitgevoerd dienen te worden op de verschillende betekenisvolle plekken in Mekka en Medina. Om de bedevaart te kunnen ondernemen, hebben Marokkaanse pelgrims te maken met twee verschillende politieke autoriteiten van wie zij afhankelijk zijn om hun verlangens om de reis te volbrengen te kunnen realiseren: de Marokkaanse en Saoedische staat. Vandaar dat in het tweede empirische deel van het proefschrift de relatie tussen religieuze en macro-politieke aspecten van de Hajj worden besproken. In dit deel laat ik zien hoe de bedevaart in Marokko zowel in de beleving van pelgrims zelf als op overheidsniveau kan fungeren als kenmerk van nationale identiteit. Als beschermheer van de heilige steden Mekka en Medina beschikt de Saoedische staat over de macht om de ervaringen van pelgrims in overeenstemming te brengen met de eigen politieke en religieuze agenda. Samengevat bespreek ik in het tweede empirische deel hoe op de basis van hun klasse en gender posities in de Marokkaanse samenleving pelgrims zich verhouden tot de ruimere gemeenschap van moslims en tot de Marokkaanse natiestaat.

In het derde empirische gedeelte ga ik in op de vraag hoe Marokkanen die vanwege hun levensomstandigheden slechts met grote moeite of in het geheel niet kunnen voldoen aan de rituele verplichting van de Hajj daar mee omgaan. Ik bespreek hoe het thema van de Hajj in culturele uitingsvormen zoals liederen, verhalen en mediaproducties aanwezig is in het sociaal-culturele leven in Marokko. Ik betoog dat middels deze domeinen de heilige plekken in Mekka en Medina bij wijze van spreken figuurlijk naar Marokko worden gehaald. Ik laat zien hoe de gevoelens die zulke liederen en verhalen in mensen oproepen veelal fungeren als instrument om het zelfbeeld van mensen als Marokkaanse moslim te voeden.

De indeling van hoofdstukken van het proefschrift is als volgt:

In de proloog beschrijf ik het pad dat ik heb bewandeld om tot het thema van mijn onderzoek te komen, gevolgd door een inleidende paragraaf waarin ik het doel en de belangrijkste onderzoeksvragen van mijn studie

uiteenzet en de oorsprong en verschillende riten van de bedevaart beschrijf. De proloog sluit af met een historisch overzicht van Marokkaanse betrokkenheid bij de Hajj.

In het eerste hoofdstuk presenteer ik het theoretische en methodologische onderzoekskader. Eerst bespreek ik enkele sleutelbegrippen die ik hanteer uit antropologische discussies over pelgrimage, 'lived religion'/ religie in het dagelijks leven en de constructie van identiteit. In de tweede paragraaf beschrijf ik de onderzoeklocatie en het 'verhaal' van het verloop van mijn onderzoek. Hierin reflecteer ik op de gehanteerde methodologie, kwesties rond mijn eigen positionering als etnograaf en de aard van het multi-sited etnografisch veldwerk zoals ik dat heb verricht.

De tekst die volgt op de inleiding bestaat uit drie delen waarin het tijdens het onderzoek geproduceerde empirische materiaal wordt geanalyseerd. Ieder deel is opgedeeld in drie hoofdstukken. De hoofdstukken twee, drie en vier beschrijven in chronologische volgorde de ervaringen van pelgrims voorafgaand, tijdens en na voltooiing van de Hajj. Deze hoofdstukken schetsen een beeld van de betekenissen die pelgrims aan ieder van deze fasen toekennen. Hoofdstuk twee richt zich op de procedure die pelgrims doorlopen alvorens op bedevaart te kunnen gaan. In dit hoofdstuk worden de verwachtingen en motivaties besproken van mensen die zich voorbereiden op de Hajj. Uit het hoofdstuk komt naar voren hoe de betekenissen die zij toekennen aan de bedevaart gerelateerd zijn aan uiteenlopende persoonlijke en collectieve activiteiten en riten die zij ondernemen. Een belangrijk onderdeel betreft de zogenaamde *qurʿa*, of 'loterij' aan de hand waarvan wordt bepaald wie op bedevaart zal kunnen gaan. Voor het aanvragen van een Hajj-visum en package-tour dient men over aanzienlijke financiële middelen te beschikken, evenals vaardigheden om de hele administratieve procedure goed te kunnen doorlopen. De aanvraagperiode wordt gekenmerkt door grote onzekerheid, wisselende emotionele gesteldheid, en onderhandelingen en besprekingen tussen degenen die gekozen zijn, en zij die niet gekozen zijn. In dit deel bespreek ik ook de opties en

ervaringen van een categorie Marokkanen die weliswaar niet gekozen zijn in de loterij maar alternatieve wegen bewandelen om toch op Hajj te gaan. Deze processen wijzen erop dat zowel formeel administratieve als religieuze activiteiten die voorafgaan aan de Hajj bijdragen aan de constructie van de religieuze beleving van de bedevaart.

In hoofdstuk drie bespreek ik de ervaringen van de pelgrims tijdens hun verblijf in Mekka. Door de Hajj te analyseren als een zintuiglijke ervaring, reflecteer ik op hoe pelgrims na terugkeer spreken over hun tijd in Mekka. Ik betoog dat zij hun herinneringen veelal beschrijven door middel van verhalen vol verwijzingen naar zintuigelijke ervaringen van tast, geur, smaak, gezicht en gehoor, hetgeen hen in staat stelt om ervaringen te herbeleven en de emotionele betekenis van de Hajj te benadrukken. Hoofdstuk drie en vier verbind ik aan elkaar door te laten zien hoe Marokkanen actief gebruik maken van hun herinneringen aan de bedevaart en hun relatie tot de Kaʿba, de Grote Moskee in Mekka, andere heilige plekken en de mensen die zij daar ontmoetten om te kunnen putten uit de kracht die de Hajj ervaring hen biedt voor hun dagelijkse en religieuze leven na terugkeer in Marokko.

Hoofdstuk vier schetst het leven van pelgrims nadat zij zijn teruggekeerd naar Marokko. In dit hoofdstuk beantwoord ik de vraag hoe de bedevaart naar Mekka het leven van alledag in relatie tot de persoonlijke, religieuze, en sociale bezigheden van pelgrims beïnvloedt, en hoe pelgrims worden gezien en bejegend binnen hun lokale gemeenschap. Ik bespreek de verwachtingen ten aanzien van pelgrims van familieleden, kennissen en de ruimere gemeenschap, en het beroep dat deze mensen vaak doen op teruggekeerde pelgrims. Het hoofdstuk laat aldus de sociale inbedding van de Hajj in het leven van Marokkanen zien, en beschrijft de houdingen van Marokkanen ten opzichte van hen die de status van *ḥājj* of *ḥājja* genieten. Het hoofdstuk laat zien hoe de verhoudingen tussen mensen zowel gevormd wordt door de sociale interactie na terugkeer van de bedevaart, alsook door de veranderingen die pelgrims zelf hebben ondergaan, in samenhang met de manier waarop zij zich positioneren.

In de hoofdstukken vijf, zes en zeven verschuift de focus naar specifieke onderwerpen aangaande de Hajj en de dynamiek van uiteenlopende dimensies van identiteitspolitiek en machtsrelaties. Hoofdstuk vijf bouwt voort op het thema identiteitsvorming en richt zich specifiek op hoe de Hajj kan fungeren om nationale identiteit uit te drukken dan wel vorm te geven. Ofschoon de bedevaart moslims in staat stelt om nationale grenzen te overstijgen, toon ik aan dat de identificatie van Marokkaanse pelgrims met hun vaderland en hun Marokkaanse 'thuis'-gevoelens toenemen door de Hajj als gevolg van hun ontmoetingen met niet-Marokkanen in Mekka. Ik betoog dat dit niet alleen voortkomt uit hetgeen de pelgrims zelf ervaren, maar ook worden gevoed door verhalen in de media en door nationale discoursen waarin de bedevaart wordt aangewend als aanleiding voor nationale politieke mobilisatie door de Marokkaanse regering.

Waar hoofdstuk vijf nationale identificatie en interne politieke kwesties centraal staan, zo wordt in hoofdstuk zes beschreven hoe Marokkanen hun beleving van de bedevaart zien in relatie tot de manier waarop de Saoedische staat de controle over en management van de Hajj procedure vormgeeft. Hier bespreek ik Marokkaanse visies op de huidige modernisering van de bedevaart, op de Saoedische regelgeving ten aanzien van de feitelijke uitvoering van de verschillende Hajj riten, en op de manier waarop de Saoedische staat politiek gezag uitoefent over de miljoenen moslims die jaarlijks naar Mekka reizen. In hoofdstuk zes wordt, met andere woorden, ingezoomd op het spanningsveld tussen mondiaal moslim burgerschap enerzijds en nationaal burgerschap en politiek anderzijds.

Opvattingen over religieus en nationaal burgerschap doorkruisen die van klasse, gender en leeftijd. In hoofdstuk zeven analyseer ik daarom de relatie tussen de Hajj en de agency van vrouwen van verschillende leeftijd en uit verschillende sociale lagen van de Marokkaanse samenleving. In het bijzonder richt ik me op de fysieke en sociale mobiliteit van vrouwen. Hoewel tegenwoordig beduidend meer vrouwelijke pelgrims op bedevaart gaan dan voorheen, zien vrouwen zich nog altijd voor meer

uitdagingen geplaatst dan hun mannelijke reisgenoten. Behalve dat zij te maken krijgen met regels van de hierboven genoemde politieke autoriteiten, is een vrouw die op bedevaart wenst te gaan afhankelijk van de steun en begeleiding van een mannelijke autoriteit, meestal een nabij familielid. Ik bespreek hoe vrouwen van verschillende leeftijden en met verschillende sociale achtergronden omgaan met deze controle mechanismen en ik laat zien hoe de bedevaart zelf vrouwen een kans biedt om sociale erkenning te krijgen en sociaal en religieus kapitaal te verwerven.

In de hoofdstukken acht, negen en tien richt ik me op hoe Mekka en de Hajj figureren in het culturele leven in Marokko. Hoofdstuk acht gaat in op een lokale bedevaartvorm die in Marokko bekend staat als *Hajj al-miskīn*, 'de bedevaart van de armen'. In dit hoofdstuk schets ik hoe mensen die niet in staat zijn om op bedevaart naar Mekka te gaan, lokale alternatieven vinden waar zij een aantal overeenkomstige riten als die tijdens de Hajj uitvoeren. Op twee verschillende locaties waar de bedevaart van de armen wordt uitgevoerd, volg ik de Marokkaanse pelgrims die daaraan deelnemen, om te bespreken hoe zij deze lokale bedevaart verbinden met de bedevaart die tegelijkertijd in Mekka plaatsvindt. Ik concentreer me op de religieuze, sociale en politieke betekenis van dergelijke lokale bedevaartpraktijken in de beleving van de deelnemers zelf. Daarnaast bespreek ik hoe zulke lokale bedevaarten worden betwist door Marokkanen die uitsluitend Mekka, Medina en Jerusalem erkennen als geldig en 'authentieke' islamitische bedevaartsoorden.

De hoofdstukken negen en tien zoomen in op specifieke dimensies van het Marokkaanse culturele leven waarin aan de bedevaart naar Mekka wordt gerefereerd. Wat beide hoofdstukken delen is dat zij laten zien hoe de Hajj deel uitmaakt van het dagelijks leven van Marokkanen middels verhalen en liederen. Hoofdstuk negen behandelt de sociale inbedding van de bedevaart in het leven van alledag door enkele populaire liederen en de manier waarop daarin de bedevaart genoemd wordt te bespreken. Marokko kent verschillende muziekgenres en de teksten van liederen uit

uiteenlopende genres bieden inzicht in de betekenis van de bedevaart voor Marokkanen. Ik beschrijf waar en hoe dergelijke liederen ten gehore worden gebracht en betoog dat zij luisteraars herinneren aan de Hajj en aldus vreugde schenken door hen in verbinding te stellen met de heilige plek Mekka.

In hoofdstuk tien zet ik de bespreking van de culturele inbedding van de Hajj in Marokko voort door in te zoomen op verwijzingen naar de bedevaart in verhalen die mensen elkaar in uiteenlopende settings vertellen. Soms dienen zulke verhalen om correct geacht moraal gedrag te schetsen, en op andere momenten wijzen ze op een beloning van God of een teken van diens acceptatie van iemands goede daden of voorbeeldige gedrag als moslim. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien hoe de Hajj is verweven met het soort verhalen dat Marokkanen met elkaar op lokaal niveau delen. Ik betoog dat zulke verhalen een zingevende functie hebben in de levens van de vertellers en hun gehoor en bijdraagt aan de vormgeving van hun religieuze en morele identificaties.

In de conclusie reflecteer ik op de implicaties van mijn bevindingen voor de beantwoording van die onderzoeksvraag en het theoretische kader waarin het onderzoek is ingebed. Ik betoog dat de betekenis van de bedevaart naar Mekka de uitvoering van de riten van de bedevaart als zodanig overstijgt. Ik wijs hier op het belang om in ogenschouw te nemen dat hoewel de bedevaart een reis is naar en op een heilige plek, ook de reis terug, die wegvoert van die heilige plek, grote impact heeft. Als pelgrims na hun contact met het heilige huiswaarts keren, brengen ze onvermijdelijk nieuw moreel, spiritueel of zelfs materiëel kapitaal met zich mee als gevolg van hun Hajj ervaring. Met andere woorden: hoewel de bedevaart buiten hun dagelijkse leefwereld plaatsvindt, is deze stevig ingebed in het dagelijks leven van Marokkanen. Pelgrims streven ernaar te leven naar het prestige dat hun nieuwe titel als *al-ḥājj/al-ḥājja* met zich meebrengt, alsook de verantwoordelijkheid om 'trouw' te zijn aan de nieuwe status als iemand die Mekka heeft bezocht. Ethische groei, zo betoog ik, is niet alleen gebaseerd op uitingen van vroomheid; evenzeer van belang zijn de manieren waarop pelgrims na terugkeer omgaan met

wat ze ervaren als een terugval in oude gewoontes en gevoelens van onvermogen, zwakheid en falen die daarmee gepaard gaan. Derhalve acht ik het van groot belang om bij de bestudering van het leven van alledag van pelgrims oog te hebben voor situaties waarin zij in eigen ogen moreel falen; hoe zij met zulk falen omgaan kan evenzeer als voorbeeldig gedrag bijdragen aan het proces van zelfontwikkeling als moslim. Pelgrims zijn in het algemeen empatisch en beweren dat het hun ontwikkelingsproces bevordert als zij goed weten om te gaan met terugval, twijfels, en interne conflicten. Een benadering gericht op de sociaal-culturele inbedding van religie in het dagelijks leven levert dan ook een rijke, gelaagde analyse op. Vandaar dat de conclusie van het onderzoek luidt dat afhankelijk van de specifieke omstandigheden waarin pelgrims zich tijdens de Hajj bevinden, er altijd lijnen zijn aan te wijzen via welke de bedevaart verweven is met andere, soms conflicterende domeinen en 'grand schemes' in hun dagelijkse leefwereld.

De epiloog die volgt op de conclusie heeft tot doel de lezer naast alle verhalen in het proefschrift, ook visueel inzicht te bieden in het onderzoek. De epiloog verkent de visuele dimensies van de manier waarop representaties van de Hajj en Mekka figureren in het dagelijks leven in Marokko.

الملخص بالعربية

مكة في المغرب: حج بيت الله الحرام في الحياة اليومية للمغاربة

تتعلق أطروحة الدكتوراه هذه بالطرق التي يتجلى فيها الحج إلى مكة في المجتمع المغربي. السؤال الرئيسي في هذا البحث هو: كيف يبرز الحج في الحياة اليومية للمغاربة، وكيف يبرز الحج في الممارسات اليومية للحجاج في المغرب؟ للتحقيق في هذا السؤال المحوري قضيت ما مجموعه ثمانية عشر شهراً في المغرب بين صيف عام 2015 وشتاء عام 2017. شاركت في الحياة اليومية للمغاربة عبر نسيج حياتهم الغني: لاحظت أفعالهم ، استمعت إلى قصصهم ، عشت معهم في منازلهم وقضيت أوقاتاً في أماكن عملهم. انضممت إلى أشخاص ممن أدوا أو رغبوا بأداء فريضة الحج خلال أعمالهم اليومية. كما تابعت عملية التسجيل للحج، وما يرافقها من استعدادات قبل الانطلاق إلى مكة. رافقت العائلات إلى المطار أثناء وداعهم للحجاج المغادرين وخلال ترحيبهم بعودتهم سالمين إلى أرض الوطن. كانت محادثاتي كثيرة ومتنوعة في جميع هذه المناسبات المذكورة آنفًا. قضيت ثلاثة مواسم حج في المغرب وشهدت الطقوس التي تحدث خلال هذه الفترة، ما قبلها وما بعدها كذلك.

أناقش في هذه الأطروحة الحجة القائلة بأنه على الرغم من أن الحج يتم في مكان بعيد عن المغرب، إلا أن تجربة المغاربة في الحج وما بعد عودتهم مدمجة بشكل كبير في حياتهم اليومية. توضح هذه الدراسة من وجهات نظر مختلفة كيف أن السياق المغربي اليومي يصوغ تصورات الحجاج عن تجربتهم في مكة، وفي المقابل، كيف أن تجربة الحج تشكل منعطفاً في حياة المغاربة ليس فيما يتعلق بمكانته الدينية فحسب بل لأثر التجربة على تصرفاتهم وقيمهم ومواقفهم، وكذلك على إحساسهم بالهوية المغربية وكيف يصبح الحج نقطة مرجعية رئيسية لأفكارهم الشخصية والاجتماعية ولتحديد الهوية.

تقسم هذه الاطروحة إلى ثلاثة محاور رئيسية ويقسم كل منها إلى ثلاثة فصول. يناقش المحور الأول رحلة الحج، ابتداءاً بلوقت الذي يعقد فيه المسلم النية لأداء هذا الواجب الديني وما يرافق ذلك من تجهيزات دينية وعملية، مروراً بتجربة الحج والعودة إلى المغرب، وما يرويه الحاج عن مآثر الرحلة، وصولاً إلى لقب الحاج/الحاجة وما يرافق هذا التشريف من مسؤوليات دينية واجتماعية. أما المحور الثاني فيناقش السلطتين السياسيتين التي تعتمد عليهما تحقيق الرغبة في السفر إلى مكة: الدولتين المغربة والسعودية. هنا أناقش العلاقة بين الجوانب الدينية والسياسية للحج بما في ذلك سلطة التنظيم والتأثير على تجربة الحجاج. كما يناقش هذا المحور القضايا المتعلقة بتجربة النساء في الحج. ثم يناقش المحور الثالث من الأطروحة كيف يدمج المغاربة الحج إلى مكة في العديد من جوانب حياتهم الاجتماعية والثقافية الأمر الذي يتجلى في ممارسات عدة يتم التكيز هنا على ثلاث منها: ظاهرة محلية تسمى "حج المسكين"، والأغاني، والحكايات.

تتفرع فصول هذه الأطروحة على النحو التالي:

تبدأ الأطروحة بمقدمة تتبع رحلة البحث في دراسة الحج، يليها قسم يشرح الأسئلة والأهداف الرئيسية للدراسة ومقدمة موجزة عن الحج إلى مكة، وطقوس الحج، إضافة إلى نبذة تتتبع تاريخ الحج في المغرب إلى يومنا هذا.

الفصل الأول من الأطروحة يعرض الأطر النظرية والمنهجية التي تقود البحث. يعرض أولاً المفاهيم الأساسية في اللإطار النظري من مناقشات أنثروبولوجية حول الحج، والحياة اليومية، وتكوين الهوية. أما الجزء الثاني من هذا الفصل فيعرض موقع البحث و "قصته" بما في ذلك السرد المنهجي، وأسئلة تحديد موقع الإثنوغرافي وانعكاساته على البحث الميداني في الأنثروبلوجيا.

تتوالى الفصول الثاني والثالث والرابع بحسب التسلسل الزمني لتجربة الحج: قبل الحج، وأثناءه، وبعده. يبحث الفصل الثاني في الإجراءات التي تتم قبل مغادرة الحجاج في رحلة الحج ليبين المعاني التي يعلقها الحجاج الطامحين على حجهم وتوقعاتهم ودوافعهم. يوضح الفصل كيف يتم دمج هذه المعاني في الأنشطة والطقوس الشخصية والجماعية. تتميز هذه الفترة بقدر كبير من الإجراءات أهمها مرحلة "القرعة" وما يترتب عليها من تحضير مادي، ومعنوي، وديني قبل الحج. كما يعرض الفصل طرق الإلتفاف على عملية القرعة، وأهمية هذه المرحلة بالنسبة للحجاج.

يناقش الفصل الثالث تجارب الحجاج في مكة من خلال الإطار النظري المتعلق بالتجربة الحسية. يعرض الفصل الأهمية الوصفية لذكريات الحجاج التي تعتمد في الغالب على إشارات إلى الحواس الخمس المتمثلة في اللمس والرائحة والذوق والبصر والسمع، والانخراط في عملية تساعد الحجاج على عيش - أو إعادة- التجربة، وتعزيز المغزى العاطفي للحج.

يعكس الفصل الرابع حياة الحجاج لدى عودتهم إلى المغرب بعد أداء فريضة الحج. في هذا الفصل يطرح السؤال: كيف يؤثر الحج إلى مكة على الحياة اليومية للحجاج فيما يتعلق بممارساتهم الدينية والاجتماعية الشخصية؟ وكيف ينظر إليهم ويعاملون في مجتمعهم المحلي؟ يناقش الفصل توقعات الأسرة والدوائر الاجتماعية وأفراد المجتمع على نطاق أوسع من الحجاج كما يصور العلاقات الاجتماعية للحجاج، وكذلك التغييرات في هوية الحاج/الحاجّة.

ينتقل التركيز في الفصول الخامس والسادس والسابع إلى أسئلة محددة تتعلق بسياسات الحج، والهوية وعلاقات القوة. ينتطلق الفصل الخامس في مسألة تكوين الهوية وينظر بشكل خاص إلى الحج باعتباره صانعًا للهوية الوطنية ومؤشرًا لها. على الرغم من أن الحج إلى مكة المكرمة يمثل فرصة للمسلمين لتجاوز حواجز الدولة، إلا أن ارتباط الحجاج المغاربة ببلدهم الأم وإحساسهم بالانتماء الوطني يزدادون خلال الحج وبعده نتيجة للتجارب التي يواجهونها في مكة واختلاطهم بغيرهم من المسلمين. إلا أن هذه التجربة لا يصوغها الحجاج أنفسهم فحسب، بل أيضًا السرد الإعلامي والخطابات الوطنية التي يستخدم فيها الحج كمناسبة للتعبئة السياسية الوطنية من قبل الحكومة المغربية.

يستكشف الفصل السادس آراء المغاربة في تجربة الحج فيما يتعلق بإدارة الحج وإجراءاته، ويناقش وجهات النظر المغربية حول تحديث الحج، والضوابط المتعلقة بالأداء الفعلي لمختلف مراسم الحج،

وعلى السلطة السياسية التي تمارسها الدولة السعودية على ملايين المسلمين الذين يسافرون إلى مكة كل عام.

تتقاطع مفاهيم المواطنة والقومية مع الطبقة الاجتماعية والجنس والعمر، لذلك، يناقش الفصل السابع دور الحج فيما يتعلق بتجربة النساء من مختلف الأعمار والطبقات الاجتماعية ، وبشكل أكثر تحديداً على مكانتهن الاجتماعية. يتطرق هذا الفصل إلى المعيقات التي تواجهها النساء في الحج إلى مكة، والتي تختلف عن تلك الخاصة بنظرائهن الذكور. بالإضافة إلى الاضطرار إلى التعامل مع لوائح السلطات السياسية، لا يسمح لأغلبية النساء بالسفر لأداء مراسم الحج إلا بوجود محرم (أحد أفراد الأسرة المقربين من الذكور). يناقش هذا الفصل كيف تتفاوض النساء من مختلف الأعمار والخلفيات الاجتماعية مع أنماط التحكم هذه وكيف يمثل الحج في حد ذاته فرصة لاكتساب الاعتراف الاجتماعي والديني بأهمية النساء في المجتمع المغربي.

تبحث الفصول الثامن والتاسع والعاشر في كيفية ظهور مكة والحج في الحياة الثقافية اليومية المغربية. يركز الفصل الثامن على شكل من أشكال الحج المحلي المعروف في المغرب باسم "حج المسكين" أو "حج الفقراء". يعالج الفصل كيف يحاول عدد من المغاربة - ممن لا يستطيعون أداء فريضة الحج إلى مكة المكرمة - إيجاد بدائل محلية يقومون فيها بطقوس مماثلة لتلك التي تجري في مكة المكرمة وبالقرب منها. يناقش الفصل الأهمية الدينية والاجتماعية والسياسية لمثل هذه الطقوس المحلية وكيف ينظر باقي المغاربة ممن لا يعترفون بهذا الحج المحلي إلى هذه الظاهرة.

ينتقل الفصل التاسع إلى مناقشة الاندماج الاجتماعي والثقافي للحج في الحياة المغربية اليومية من خلال النظر في الأغاني الشعبية، وكيفية تقديم الحج في تلك الأغاني. يبين هذا الفصل الأنواع المختلفة للموسيقى المغربية التي تتغنى كلماتها بمكة وبالحج بحيث يعيد الاستماع لهذه الأغاني ذكريات الحج، كما يسهم في ارتباط الحجيج العاطفي والديني بمكة المكرمة.

يواصل الفصل العاشر مناقشة الاندماج الثقافي للحج في الحياة اليومية للمغاربة بتسليط الضوء على أشكال السرد القصصي التي يرويها المغاربة عن الحج. تستعمل هذه القصص والحكايات أحيانًا للدلالة على مغزى أخلاقي وأحيانًا أخرى للإشارة إلى تدابير الله إضافة إلى معانٍ إسلامية واجتماعية أخرى. يوضح هذا الفصل كيف يتشابك الحج في الروايات التي يشاركها المغاربة والتي تعطي معنى لحياة الرواة وتبني هوياتهم الدينية والأخلاقية.

في الخلاصة تعود هذه الأطروحة إلى سؤال البحث الرئيس حول تجليات الحج في الحياة اليومية للمغاربة. عندما يعود الحجاج إلى بلادهم ، فإنهم حتماً يحملون تجربة جديدة تؤثر على مكانتهم الاجتماعية والدينية أو حتى المادية - كجزء من تجربة الحج. بعبارة أخرى ، بينما يجري الحج خارج الحياة اليومية لمسلمي المغرب، إلا أنه جزء لا يتجزأ من الحياة اليومية للمغاربة. يسعى الحجاج إلى الارتقاء إلى مستوى لقبهم الجديد "الحاج" أو "الحاجة" ، وهي ألقاب تأتي مع مكانة رفيعة في المجتمع إلا أنها في الوقت نفسه محمّلة بمسؤولية اجتماعية ودينية. فالحياة اليومية لا تخلو من الخطأ، والانتكاسات ومشاعر العجز والضعف. إلا أن جميع هذه التجارب يمكن اعتبارها أيضًا جزءًا من

مسيرة حياة المسلم. لذلك فإن النهج الذي يركز على التماسك الاجتماعي والثقافي للدين في الحياة اليومية هو وسيلة غنية للاستكشاف ويسمح لنا باستنتاج أنه اعتمادًا على الظروف المحددة التي يجد فيها الحجاج أنفسهم أثناء الحج، يوجد دائمًا خيوط يتشابك من خلالها موسم الحج مع مجالات أخرى في عوالم حياتهم اليومية.

يلي الخاتمة وصف فوتوغرافي لتجليات الحج في المغرب مما تم توثيقه خلال البحث الميداني لهذه الأطروحة.

About the researcher

Kholoud Al-Ajarma is a researcher in the fields of Anthropology, Theology, and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen with primary focus on Islamic pilgrimage (Hajj) and its meaning in everyday life in Morocco. She holds an MA in International Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies (from Coventry University, England) and an MPhil in Anthropology and Development Studies with a distinguished dissertation on 'Identity construction among the Palestinian diaspora in Chile' (from the University of Bergen, Norway). Al-Ajarma was also a research fellow at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS).

During the years of her PhD studies, Al-Ajarma taught at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies first 'Anthropology of Muslims Socities' (2017-2019) and later 'Islam: History, Sources and Practices' (2018-2020) and 'Minorities in Contemporary Europe' at the Faculty of Arts (2020). Throughout her studies, Al-Ajarma also continued to volunteer with refugee communities in the Mediterranean region working on issues related to education, media, water, and environmental justice. She has several published articles on water and migration in addition to other published articles on women's political economy in conflict, education, and development.

In addition to her academic studies, Al-Ajarma is award-winning photographer and film-maker whose films and photography has been exhibited in more than fifteen countries. She began volunteering among refugee communities at the age of 14 and since then participated in developing various programs and projects mainly for refugee children and youth. She is alumni of several leadership programs including Coady International Institute's Global Change Leaders for women's leadership (St. Francis Xavier University, Canada), Young Leaders Visitors Programme (YLVP of the Swedish Institute, Sweden) and the DAWN's Training Institute for young feminists (Development Alternative with Women for a New Era). In 2020 she was selected as a MENA fellow of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC).